

TOP STORY: WASHINGTON'S MOST POWERFUL LOBBY
February 21 - March 6, 1994

In THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

TIME BOMBS

Why the new
global economy will
trigger more
explosions like
Chiapas

by
NOAM
CHOMSKY
page 14

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EDITORIAL

ENDING THE WAR ON VIETNAM

President Clinton's lifting of the trade embargo against Vietnam was long overdue. That it fell to Clinton to take this step toward normalizing relations with the first country to defeat American imperial power is an irony of history, given his youthful indiscretion of opposing the war. But while this positive step required careful stage-managing by the administration, it was hardly an act of courage. George Bush would have done the same thing had he been re-elected in 1992.

The plain fact is that corporate America did not want to face the possibility of being excluded from a potentially important arena of investment and sales. France, Japan and many other smaller players are already well entrenched in the Vietnamese economy, both as traders and investors. American corporations want in. And, like George Bush before him, Bill Clinton hears the voice of his masters.

True, the POW/MIA lobby had to be finessed. That would have been easy for Bush. For Clinton, who feels it necessary to prove he is no peacenik, the lobby looms large. And so in announcing the lifting of the embargo, he fed the American people lies that diminished an otherwise commendable decision. Increased trade and investment, Clinton insisted, had nothing to do with his lifting of the embargo. He did it, he said, because he was "absolutely convinced it offers us the best way to resolve the fate of those who remain missing and about whom we are not sure."

But, of course, we *are* sure. There is no question about what happened to the 2,238 American soldiers still listed as missing in action. They are not being held as prisoners. They, along with 58,152 other Americans—and more than a million Vietnamese—died in a failed effort to prevent Vietnam from gaining its independence. And, in fact,

the number of missing from this war is a small fraction of the 8,000 or so still missing from the Korean War and the more than 60,000 from World War II.

From day one this issue has been a hoax, manipulated in cruel and cynical ways. On a personal level, the families and loved ones of those listed as missing have been the main victims. But in a broader sense both the Vietnamese and the American people have suffered from the hatreds and tensions perpetuated by the MIA lobby.

Every president since Richard Nixon has been guilty of using this hoax for his own purposes—and, in the process, of inflicting pain and suffering on the families of the missing. Under presidents Nixon, Carter and Reagan, the MIAs were used as Cold War symbols of communist inhumanity. Bush invoked them in coded attacks on Democratic liberals. Clinton uses them because he is unable to understand the power

of truth, and because he prefers the easy way out of all political problems.

Here lies another irony. The great majority of the American people would like to put the Vietnam War behind them. This is reflected in the popular culture by a shift in the presentation of the war. In many ways this shift is analogous to the changing depiction of American Indians in the movies—who have been transformed from savages to be annihilated to proud people with humane culture and values. Similarly, the portrayal of the war in Vietnam has changed to the point where a major new movie, *Between Heaven and Earth*, tells the story from a Vietnamese viewpoint.

Clinton's lifting of the embargo is a popular act. The MIA issue will quickly fade—if politicians and the media allow it to. It's our guess that the American people are fully aware that Clinton has been disingenuous in explaining why he lifted the embargo. The president would gain in both popularity and stature if he could summon up the courage to tell the truth. That would be refreshing and, unlike his pampering of the military and his tough talk about crime, it would be a sign of real strength.

Clinton has taken a decisive step toward putting the Vietnam War behind us, but he has muddied the waters by lying about the reason.

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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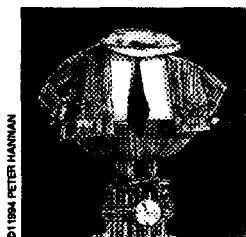
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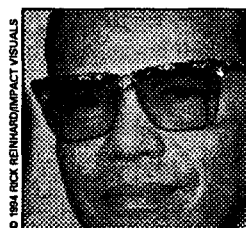
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 more explosions like Chiapas.*

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LETTERS

Ugly duckling

I just finished reading Tim Wohlforth's article (*ITT*, Jan. 24). He makes the same mistakes that most of the apologists for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) make.

He assumes that free trade will automatically expand markets, therefore creating jobs. This assumption is dubious at best, and job creation is not a corporate goal. Profit, profit and more profit is what corporations are all about. If they can increase their profits without adding to their headcount, they will. The author's mistake is believing that NAFTA is somehow a jobs bill. It's not.

Furthermore, he argues that government or industry should take responsibility for the dislocation costs and retraining of their (ex-)workers. Nothing in NAFTA takes ownership of this

problem. It isn't addressed because the creators of NAFTA weren't concerned about workers when they drafted it.

In Joint Council 32 of the Teamsters, we have a service bureau that oversees 18 different retraining programs. The sad fact is there are very few jobs available for graduates. More often than not, retrainees end up in the service sector in low-paying jobs that require no training at all. This situation will not improve until industry starts to expand the skilled labor job base. So far, that has not happened, and nothing in NAFTA will generate such a base.

Wohlforth can expound all he wants about what Marx would have thought of NAFTA (as if somehow that makes things all right), but if NAFTA walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it definitely ain't no swan.

A. Veldey
Minneapolis

Tool of Reason?

Tim Wohlforth (*ITT*, Jan. 24) is quite wrong. Marx would have opposed NAFTA and GATT today. It is Hegel who might have supported it, although that too is doubtful. Hegel, unlike Wohlforth, was no fool or tool in the hands of the cunning of Reason. Wohlforth has an inadequate historical sense and thus he believes that what was appropriate in 1848 or 1870 remains so in profoundly different circumstances. Marx would not have been blind to these changes nor so enslaved to any theory.

•**Job retraining:** This is a chimera when the global market is as unfettered as it is in the "race to the bottom." Every study we have of job retraining programs indicates that unemployment remains high and that workers' real wages continue to fall despite such efforts. The global job market is glutted. Direct democratic governmental interference in the market is necessary if we want to provide decent jobs for all who can and want to work.

•**Education:** There can be no successful "offensive to improve our educational system" when the economy has a permanent glut of workers at every skill level, so long, that is, as we link education to workplace skills. But try pushing "education as an end in itself" in these free-market times. Marx, like Hegel, believed an educated person was one who could do what any other human could do, a generalist

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



capable of lifelong learning of skills and disciplines. Try selling that notion of education today.

◦**International solidarity:** World War I shattered the illusion of worker solidarity across borders, and our collective experience since then gives no credibility to the view that workers of the world today are any closer to the cosmopolitan, cross-cultural, genderless solidarity necessary for an effective global labor movement. International capital has powerful weapons at work to divide all people, to atomize them, to prevent their joining together, to stir up their nationalistic, ethnic, racial, sexual and geographic differences.

American unions face a practical near-impossibility in organizing brainwashed anti-union American workers.

And good luck in Mexico, where union organizers are "disappeared" every day. Wohlforth should remember that the bosses and their lackeys have enormous firepower at their disposal as a quick response to any real threat to capital's hegemony.

In 1848, Marx believed a workers' revolt might succeed; in 1871, after the invention of repeating rifles and explosive artillery shells, he recommended a change in tactics. So, too, with NAFTA and the GATT. My reading of Marx is that he would have preferred a local rejection of "free trade" while it was still possible in a theoretically free and democratic America, foreseeing, as I am sure he would have, the closing down of our chances to control the system.

Wohlforth is correct in one regard when he writes: "The general trend within the world capitalist system is toward the equalization of wages." But he forgot to add the word "downward." *In These Times* should have added it and let it go at that. People on the left nowadays tend to be pessimistic, and maybe we should be more upbeat. But it is worse to be Pollyannaish and to deny the bleakness of our present situation.

Gerald Cavanaugh
Ashland, Ore.

Overextended

Michael Klare's article (*ITT*, Jan. 10) was particularly interesting to read in light of a report in the *Washington Post* January 7 that the Saudis can no longer afford the \$30 billion in U.S.-made weapons they are committed to buying over the next several years. Some analysts warn of a potential threat to the internal stability of the kingdom if the country scrimps on domestic programs to cover the buildup. U.S. defense contractors fear that some weapons systems purchases will be delayed or canceled, leading to layoffs of thousands of workers, according to the report.

Klare, however, shows that despite the defense industry's claim that it needs such sales to Third World countries in order to save American jobs, jobs are being exported along with the technology in order to get some of the sales in the first place.

A. Rice
Great Falls, Va.

Justice

In her article on the "date-rape debate," (*ITT*, Dec. 13) Leora Tanenbaum talks of the "humiliating and unjust" experiences of her male friend at Brown University, who made "one awkward and intrusive pass at his date."

Yet in her previous paragraph, Tanenbaum said that "day to day sexism" was "by no means innocent or forgivable."

Unless this article has been mistranslated into English, it sounds to me like Tanenbaum's friend got exactly what Tanenbaum thinks he deserves.

Michael Carlson
London

Taking sides?

Kenneth Zapp, in "A United Approach" (*ITT*, Feb. 7), has written one of the best short historical pieces yet on the Bosnian civil war. It is better than the three years of hand-wringing

about "aggression," "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" in the *New York Times* and *The New Republic*.

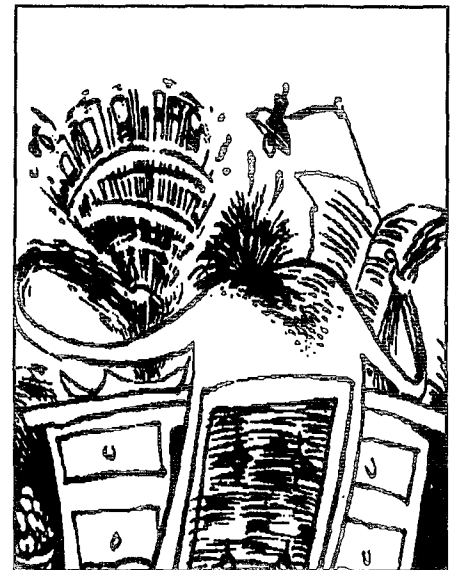
But Zapp's solution for the three-way civil war in the old Yugoslavia is a bit vague.

1) He argues that "the West must impose a solution on" the four fighting armies. But how? Would that not be imperialism? Should the United States and Germany send ground troops under NATO command, and in what proportion?

2) The Muslims, according to Zapp, should get additional land from the Serbs and Croats. How? At the cost of how many more years of fighting?

Zapp calls for a plan that, in theory, does not take sides. But if I were a Serb (which I am not), I would have to conclude that he has a bias. As an American taxpayer who is neither Orthodox, Catholic nor Muslim, why should I pay for intervention in this tragic civil war?

Robert H. Whealey
Athens, Oh.



Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you wished to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

InSHORT



LIONEL DELEVINGNE

UNHOLY COW

Last year, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) gave its final approval to artificial bovine growth hormone (BGH), which when injected into cows has the potential to increase milk production by 20 percent. The chemical company Monsanto has been working for years to get its \$1 billion version of BGH, Posilac, on the market. Questions remain, however, about how thoroughly Monsanto has tested this product, and what Monsanto's laboratory experiments really revealed. (See "The First Stone" January 10.)

Former University of Vermont veterinarian Marla Lyng says she had no idea back in 1989 just how far Monsanto researchers would go to keep the lid on negative trial results. That was the year she happened to call up the computer files on the university's Holsteins. The Chilean-born vet knew nothing about BGH; she was studying bovine abortions. But she quickly realized that something very odd was happening to these cows.

"Many of them did not show a heat, an estrus cycle," she recalls. "Those



By Woody Igou

Studies in Pentagon pinheadedness

•After spending the '80s bailing out fraudulent, unneeded and wasteful projects, the Pentagon now refuses to continue funding on the Delta Clipper Program, a project



that could revolutionize space flight. The program has had three successful launches. It was

also on schedule and on budget in its goal to send payloads into orbit at perhaps one-tenth of current costs. The Pentagon actually refused to spend money appropriated by Congress for the project.

•The Cold War is over, but that hasn't stopped the Department of Defense from proceeding with a \$27 billion satellite network designed to provide post-armageddon communications during a long nuclear war with the Soviet Union, a country that no longer exists. One prominent critic of the Milstar Satellite System, Air Force Col. Sanford Mangold, says he was "framed" and removed from his post for voicing his views. An alternative system—proposed but not accepted—would have saved \$18 billion over the current program.

of the Air Force has had to award a \$63.5 million contract to the Northrop Corp. to find a way to get rid of the white contrails that are produced at the rear of the B-2 bomber, whose "stealth" technology is supposed to make the plane undetectable to the enemy. The contrails linger in the sky for an hour, leaving a visual track stretching hundreds of miles. An Air Force spokesman, his nose growing visibly as he spoke, declared that the tracks were "not a shortcoming" of the B-2. All this, and not a peep from President Clinton. I guess he's figured out who runs this country.

Jolly bad show

In a story about women in Parliament, the *Economist* used the headline "Chamber Maids." The British news-magazine also titled an accompanying chart "House Wives."



Small wonder that only 8 percent of those in Britain's Parliament are women—the second-lowest total in Europe.

Stunned by a stupid statement? Nauseated by a noxious news item? Livid about a ludicrous lie? Contact the Appall-O-Meter, in *These Times*, 2040 N. Milwaukee, Chicago, IL 60647.

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Vapid Cultural Zephyrs
2. E Channel Stupid
3. Unauthorized Biography Zone
4. Republican Convention Rerun
5. Bob Dole Splenic
6. Mega-Dittos from Hell
7. NRA Heart and Brains
8. Pyongyang on my mind
9. Disavowed by Bosnian Serbs
10. Murry, Melt the Polar Cap!

that cycled and were bred didn't bear calves, or the calves died."

She discovered some of the Holsteins were being given an experimental BGH product, one Monsanto still won't discuss openly. According to Lyng, those cows were bearing dead and deformed calves. Some were born with holes in their skull, and one poor animal had seven legs. Still, she didn't realize how important her discoveries were until veterinarians involved in the Monsanto trial found out that she had autopsied one of the dead calves.

"They made a big stink about it," she says. "They were shouting at me on the phone to return the fetus." She says she had to have two deformed calves that had been hastily buried by the BGH researchers dug up again to determine their causes of death. The worried Lyng called on her dean and the president of the college.

"They didn't want to hear anything about it," she says bitterly. "It became a huge turmoil at the college." Lyng says she paid dearly for her outspokenness; the university decided not to renew her contract in 1991. Her tale is supported by trial files she brought with her when she left the University of Vermont. (Monsanto has disputed some of Lyng's numbers.)

University officials did not return phone calls for comment on Lyng's story, even though FDA approval of BGH—or, more accurately, the Monsanto product Posilac—frees the school from its secrecy agreement with Monsanto.

Monsanto and other manufacturers required researchers to promise not to release any BGH information without company approval. Any articles on the subject underwent manufacturer censorship before publication. Monsanto spokesman Thomas McDermott explains that this was necessary to protect data from the company's competitors. He adds, however, that the company has "almost never" prevented researchers from publishing their results in scientific journals.

Even so, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) ran up against a brick wall when it attempted to investigate BGH trials at the University of Vermont in 1992. Despite a firestorm of negative publicity, neither the college nor the company would let the GAO see their files. McDermott says the GAO refused to give Monsanto "a reasonable guarantee of confidentiality."

The objectivity of scientific papers published under this corporate veil of secrecy has been called into question. For example, a 1988 abstract authored by University of Vermont BGH researcher Alice Pell and colleagues gave readers the impression that mastitis (udder infection) was not a problem in the school's Jersey test herd. When the full report was published four years later, however, it revealed there had been a serious outbreak of the disease, with mastitis increasing 700 percent in the BGH-treated Jerseys. Pell and her co-authors have claimed that they had difficulty interpreting their results because of small herd size.

Critics point to Pell's abstract as evidence that some university researchers are in cahoots with BGH manufacturers. "Favorable responses to [BGH] have been presented promptly, loudly and repeatedly," wrote professor David S. Kronfeld in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* in 1988. "Unfavorable responses have been delayed, subdued and obscured." Critics like Kronfeld charge that chemical companies such as Monsanto bought academic acceptance by pumping millions into BGH research.

In the course of reporting this story, four BGH manufacturers were asked to release lists of their research grants given to U.S. universities. All four refused.

—Amy Poe

FARMED OUT

Is State Farm Insurance biased against homosexuals? Those involved with a small gay and lesbian community center in Columbia, S.C., believe the answer is yes.

The center, one of the few facilities of its kind in the South, has had a rough first few months. After encountering difficulties even finding a willing landlord, the center finally opened its doors this past October. But in late November, the facility received a certified letter from the State Farm Fire and Casualty Co.'s Southeastern office. The letter announced that the center's liability policy was being canceled, just two months after it had been issued.

The letter, signed by operations superintendent Ron Payne, informed the center that "while we do insure civic organizations, we do not insure high-profile organizations which may be politically active on a national scale."

But those involved with the center say their activities are hardly high profile. "It's just a place that's trying to bring the community together," said Peter Tepley, a Columbia lawyer who's active in the local gay and lesbian community. He explained that the group's activities include movie nights, ping-pong, Sunday services for a Christian gay and lesbian church, and regular meetings of the South Carolina Gay and Lesbian Business Guild.

"Clearly there's also some political activity," Tepley conceded, "just like there's political activity that goes on in, say, churches and senior citizen centers all over the country."

State Farm Fire and Casualty spokeswoman Patti Nates told *In These Times* that her company does in fact insure churches. But she reiterated that the center's policy was canceled because "our premiums do not contemplate the potential risks that groups that are high profile inherently have."

She could neither provide an example of another type of community center whose policy was canceled for being high profile, nor a "low profile" gay community center insured by State Farm.

Tepley concluded: "I think it's clearly an anti-gay and lesbian bias. We want people to understand what happened, so that when they're making insurance decisions they can think about whether State Farm is the type of company they want to do business with."

The center itself is now doing business with another insurer—but paying nearly four times as much for its policy.

—Miles Harvey

A WEIGHTY VICTORY

Teamster president Ron Carey won more than a victory for health and safety with the union's one-day strike against United Parcel Service on February 7. Nearly half of the 160,000 Teamsters members walked off their jobs in defiance of a federal court injunction and in the face of a systematic campaign of intimidation by old guard opposition leaders. The strike forced UPS to back off its demand that workers lift packages up to 150 pounds in weight. The strikers also showed the toughness and principle that are needed to revive a moribund labor movement.

During contract talks last year, UPS management denied that it planned to raise package weight limits. Then in January, the company unilaterally more than doubled the maximum permissible weight of 70 pounds. There are no legal standards for lifting, but the federal government's National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health experts recommend that a single employee lift no more than 51 pounds at a time. No other carrier appears to insist on

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

Infoshopping

Infomercials—TV ads that look like TV shows—used to fill up the dead spots in television's demographics. Now, they're creeping into prime time. NBC recently sold an hour of Sunday prime time outright to Mirage Resorts, which produced its own infomercial to take the place of *seaQuest DSV* for the evening.

Meanwhile, the pioneer of 24-hour-a-day infomercials, MTV, now has competition for its newest programming adventure, music and home shopping combined. A team effort of Time Warner, Sony and three other music industry corporations also plans to produce combination music-home shopping channels, and so does the international media conglomerate Bertelsmann. CDs and concert tickets are the proposed lead sales items.

All the news that fits

Advertorials are blooming along with infomercials. After last year's magazine-length ad for Disney designed to look like an issue of *Newsweek*, General Motors is going one better. It is producing an entire women's magazine, *Know-How*, which interweaves happy talk about GM with beauty, fashion and fix-it advice. The references are subtle enough to mask GM's role, which is just the way GM wants it, according to a spokesman quoted in the *Washington Post*: "We wanted to be part of a magazine,

rather than a magazine being part of General Motors."

The likeliest targets

A poor school district is much likelier than a wealthy one to have Chris Whittle's commercial-fed classroom news, Channel One, according to an academic study reported in *Media Culture Review* (from the Institute for Alternative Journalism, 2025 I. St., NW, #1124, Washington, DC 20006). Michael Morgan, the study's author, points out schools that spend the least on texts are the most likely to have Whittle's version of public affairs. Through the illusion of providing better educational facilities, he writes, "Channel One may be helping to widen an already dangerous gap in our society." Not inevitably, though—in one working-class Boston suburb, teachers have taken up the challenge to use Channel One to teach critical approaches to television.

Hang up and win

For everyone who's had dinner interrupted one too many times by telemarketers, the Center for the Study of Commercialism (CSR) has some tested advice: sue. Citibank paid CSR president Michael Jacobson \$750 for calling his home twice after being told to desist. The 1991 Telephone Consumer Protection Act bans recorded sales pitches, junk faxes and also repeat live calls to people who have asked for no calls. To get CSR's "Stop the Calls" kit, write them at 1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, #300, Washington, DC 20009.

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workers lifting such heavy packages without help.

Frustrated in talks with UPS, the Teamsters threatened a strike. A federal judge granted management's demand for an injunction on the grounds that the union had already filed a grievance under its contract. Teamster lawyers argued that the company was not observing its duty to bargain and that, in violation of federal workplace safety laws, its new rules created "abnormally dangerous conditions."

UPS managers served the injunction on local union officials and phoned workers, telling them they would be fired if they struck. Old guard Teamster officials who had opposed Carey's reform candidacy also sent out messages telling local unions not to strike, or they would suffer severe penalties. Despite these threats, the strike involved nearly one-third of the locals, representing one-half of UPS workers. Many of the non-striking locals were nevertheless sympathetic to the action and probably would have joined if it had lasted more than one day.

The strike forced UPS to abide by the old standards until new rules for safe handling of heavier packages can be negotiated. The company also agreed not to discipline or fine anyone within the union. Ken Paff, organizer of the reform-oriented Teamsters for a Democratic Union, cautions that now the union must organize UPS workers to refuse to handle heavy packages without help and keep pressure on management negotiators.

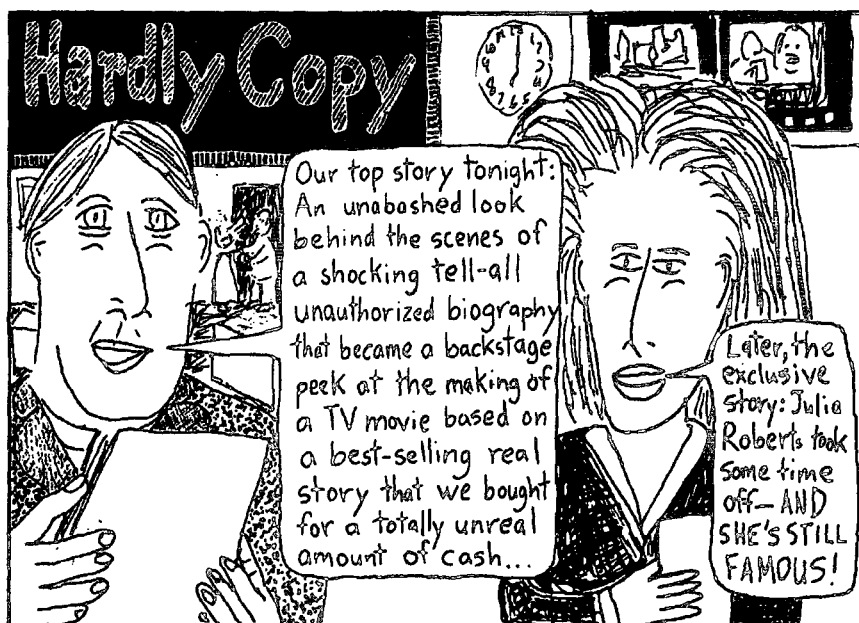
Old guard officials, who have often posed as more militant than Carey since his election, will look to many union members like saboteurs of a successful move against a widely unpopular work rule. But they have tried to paint the strike as a "catastrophe," because UPS is pursuing a \$50 million damage suit against the Teamsters.

The success of the strike may give a small boost to Carey's referendum ballot that is going out to members this month. It asks for a dues increase to help replenish the union's strike fund and compensate for many years of financial mismanagement of the union by the old guard.

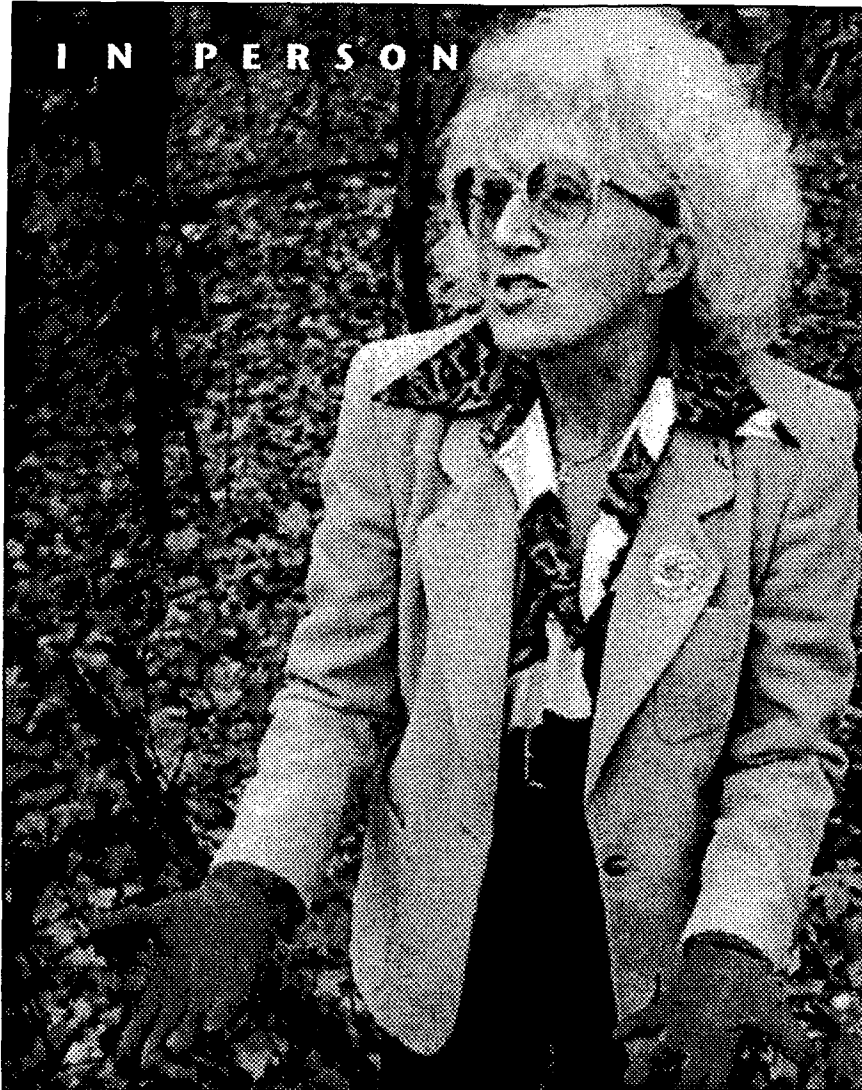
—David Moberg

ROUGH CUTS

By JA Reid



IN PERSON



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PUTTING PEOPLE SECOND

Laura Westra's holistic environmentalism

Westra is concerned, however, about correcting the behavior of an over-indulgent populace and in setting an agenda that will repair the environmental damage done by a shortsighted humanity. "We need to go beyond limited national policies and individual interests and create universal ethical principles to save the environment from destruction," she says.

As an advocate of environmental ethics, Westra challenges many of the traditional tenets of moral philosophy. "Ethical values do not exist merely in the realm of human interaction," says Westra. "Not only should animals, plants and the environment be included in a philosophic perspective; the preservation of the environment should be the foundation on which to build a modern ethical system for our future."

Throughout her ecocentric vision, Westra sets the integrity of the environment as her first priority. "Philosophers have always debated the nature of happiness. That happiness is an ultimate value was taken for granted," says

Canadian philosopher Laura Westra, a dynamic woman in her mid-50s, is a meat eater and a car driver. She is not the stereotypical fanatic so often associated with an environment-first philosophy.

ETC.

By Miles Harvey

Real welfare queens

A recent report shows that U.S. taxpayers will pay more for programs that aid corporations than for those that aid the poor. The report, "Aid for Dependent Corporations," was compiled by Essential Information, a Ralph Nader-founded group. It shows that programs to prop up corporate America will cost taxpayers \$104.3 billion this year, while programs for poor people will cost \$75.1 billion. The leading industry-on-the-dole is agriculture, which will get \$29.2 billion in taxpayer handouts. Another big sponger is the savings-and-loan industry, whose federal bailout will cost Americans \$18.3 billion in 1994.

The report was prepared in advance of the congressional debate on President Clinton's plan to overhaul the welfare system. Nader is asking a new bipartisan congressional panel on entitlement programs to "broaden the politically acceptable language and discourse of 'welfare' to include a vast variety of corporate entitlements." When asked by *Corporate Crime Reporter* about whether such a change was likely, an aide to Sen. Bob Kerry (D-NE), co-chair of the new commission, waffled.

Thin ice

It was just a few months back that CBS news anchor Dan Rather was plausibly telling a conference of TV news directors that "we have allowed this great instrument, this resource, this weapon for good, to be squandered and

cheapened." Rather received a lot of attention for calling on TV news programs to stop "mov[ing] with the mass" and show some "courage." But the effect of his words on news shows, including his own, has been almost nil. Between January 31 and February 4, for example, network news programs made the Tonya Harding affair their top story of the week. In fact, the networks devoted an astonishing 67 minutes of coverage to the skating saga, according to the *Tyndall Weekly*, which monitors news broadcasts. That's more than three times as much coverage as was received by the week's No. 2 story, a trifling subject called health care reform. The CBS *Evening News*, Rather's show, gave the Harding-Kerrigan story 29 minutes of coverage, or more than an entire day's broadcast. Why? Well, CBS just happens to be the network with a contract for the Olympic Games—so every minute of Tonya coverage was another minute of self-advertising. Courage, indeed, Dan.

Silver anniversary
Kudos to the *Washington Monthly*, which celebrates its 25th anniversary with the January/February issue. We at *In These Times* often disagree with the *Monthly's* specific prescriptions for change—but never with its unflagging commitment to reform. The anniversary issue contains a number of thought-provoking pieces, including James Fallows' critique of a "McLaughlinized" press corps and Nicholas Lemann's essay on the ways in which the federal government can work effectively.

Westra. "The wholeness of the environment should be an ultimate value because it is fundamental for all life on Earth, including our own. What is the good of all these individual rights if all life is threatened?"

A native of Italy, Westra has lived in Toronto for most of the last 37 years. She has taught in various universities in Canada and the United States. She is on the boards and editorial staffs of numerous environmental organizations, including the International Society for Environmental Ethics and the Society for the Study of Ethics and Animals.

Westra's attempts to influence public policy have not always met with approval. In 1986, she was fired from Clemson University, where she was teaching philosophy, after assigning a student to do a case study on the Sangemo Corp.

Sangemo, a subsidiary of Monsanto, was dumping capacitors—and the toxic PCBs these contained—into the local waterways of Cateechee, N.C. In this small community, which relied on the plant for its livelihood, undeniable health problems were documented, including tumors in the reproductive system of local women, spontaneous abortions and the birth of deformed babies. A small group of Cateechee women attempted to fight for their rights. When Westra decided to participate in exposing the corporation, she was dismissed from the university for having too much environmental zeal.

Most environmentalists agree that if global regulation of the environment is to work people need to develop a more holistic mindset. Westra believes that much of the resistance to environment-friendly policies is rooted in our distorted understanding of individual freedom. And she argues that both political policies and social structures need to be challenged on this issue. "Democratic principles which uphold the individual rights of free trade and free enterprise have ultimately proved harmful to our life and the environment," she says. "We cannot continue to insist on endless individual rights if we are part of both a human and non-human community."

Westra is especially critical of those policies that have allowed powerful corporations to exploit underprivileged groups. "Environmental racism is just another aspect of environmental destruction. Banned products in the United States are unloaded in Third World countries," she says. "Minority workers and impoverished areas are usually the first target for chemical companies who need to find cheap labor for a highly toxic industry."

Westra has currently joined forces with other environmental advocates, philosophers and scientists to support the Wild Earth Project. The project is one of the pillars of the Concerned Scientists Declaration, a statement by 300 scientists from around the world that aims to isolate and protect 30 percent of the earth's environment from human contact. These protected areas would be allowed to grow according to the laws of nature. Most environmentalists propose a buffer zone around these sanctuaries where light industry and organic agriculture could develop and some population would exist. "Buffer zones would separate pristine areas from more concentrated areas such as cities," says Westra, "although heavily populated areas would also be required to adhere to strict environmental laws."

Westra insists that this is the only way to fully restore the Earth's complex ecosystems. "Without the restoration of the environment's integrity, we cannot continue to sustain life on Earth," she says. "We must accept and understand that a project to save the Earth must be more than rhetoric. It must be a lived reality."

—Susan Tenaglia

THE FIRST STONE

Let us now (try to) praise Bill Clinton

By Joel Bleifuss

An *In These Times* editor who recently read over back issues from the late '70s and the early '80s was struck by the fact that the publication, having condemned the Carter administration in the harshest possible terms, didn't leave itself rhetorical room to critique the Reagan revolution. In a similar vein, friends whose political opinion I value say that *In These Times* has been too quick to damn Clinton.

Which raises a troubling question: Have progressives gotten so used to wallowing in negativity that we are mistaking a silk purse—or at least a Wal-Mart clutch—for a sow's ear?

So, vowing not to dwell on the administration's limitations, I picked up the phone and searched through Washington's liberal establishment for 10 things to praise Clinton for. My calls were often greeted with hoots of laughter, either directed at the notion that Clinton might have done 10 good deeds, or at the incongruity of *In These Times* seeking to report on them.

Off the bat, here are three. Clinton should be given credit for signing the Brady Bill. It won't do much to control guns, but it is a symbolically important first step. He also deserves praise for overturning the gag rule that had prohibited doctors in federally funded clinics from informing their patients of the abortion option. And he signed into law the Family and Medical Leave Act, which allows workers the right to take unpaid leave for a birth or illness in the family.

Making these three commonsense moves required neither courage nor the expenditure of political capital. In effect, praising the president for supporting these measures is like praising him for not torturing Socks the cat. But, hey, George Bush would have vetoed all three.

One thing is certain: on gay and lesbian issues, Clinton is

"light years ahead" of his predecessors, in the words of David Smith, spokesperson for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Clinton appointed Bruce Lehman, who is gay, as an assistant secretary at the Commerce Department and Roberta Achtenburg, who is lesbian, as an assistant secretary at Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Besides these two high-level appointments, says Smith, "There are a number of openly gay and lesbian people serving in the Clinton administration at a variety of levels."

In addition, Clinton, through his proposals to decriminalize homosexual behavior in the U.S. military, helped the cause by putting the topic of sexual orientation on the national agenda.

The fact is, human rights across the world are being taken more seriously by the administration. Take Indonesia. Mike Jendrzeczyk, the Washington director of

Asia Watch, praises Clinton for pressuring President Suharto to end human rights abuses in East Timor, which Indonesia has occupied since 1975, and to ease worker repression throughout Indonesia.

"In the case of Indonesia, this administration has put a greater emphasis on human rights and worker rights," says Jendrzeczyk. "First, when the U.N. Human Rights Commission met last March, the United States took the lead in sponsoring a hard-headed resolution on East Timor, which actually was adopted by the commission. By contrast, the Bush administration had actively assisted in watering down a statement on East Timor. Second, when Clinton met with Suharto in Tokyo in July, he was asked by 43 senators to raise East Timor and other human rights concerns—and he did. That was unprecedented. Third, last June U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor threatened that Indonesia would lose trade preferences if it didn't make concrete progress in protecting worker rights. That is a real departure from previous policy."

Another good deed to come out of the White House was the Community Development Banking and Financial Institutions Act of 1993, which has passed the House and is now before the Senate. True, some members of Congress have criticized the proposal as a timid response to an overwhelming problem, arguing that our economically devastated cities and towns deserve more than \$382 million over four years. But Joan Shapiro, a vice president at Chicago's South Shore Bank—a pioneer in community development banking—has little patience for such critics.

"It is easy to denigrate the issue by saying that this \$382 million is not enough," says Shapiro. "We are very well aware of the criticism. The issue is less the amount of the allocation than the fact that the issue is on the national agenda. And we're delighted it's there. Clinton is the first

president to focus on the issue of how you create and sustain permanent institutions that are dedicated to the economic development of their local areas."

Clinton's revitalized Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) deserves accolades for creating the Family Preservation and Support Services program. The program's support services include community-based efforts to provide mothers and fathers with a range of services that will help them become good parents. The family preservation aspect of the program addresses the problems of child abuse and works to keep families together. "The department of HHS is doing a fabulous job implementing the Family Preservation and Family Support Act," says Kathy Bonk, of the Communications Consortium, a Washington-based media resource center. "They have been very open on involving clients as well as bureaucrats and state officials. It has been a very open, remarkable process."

Clinton also deserves praise on the the health care front. Regardless of what you think of Clinton's managed-care proposal—and almost everyone here at *In These Times* prefers the Wellstone-McDermott single-payer legislation—one has to give him credit for putting universal health care on the nation's agenda. The final verdict, however, is still out.

A less ambiguous success is the National Service Act, which Clinton championed and which went through Congress in a reduced form. Sam Halperin, director of the American Youth Policy Forum in Washington, is pleased that Clinton "has refocused public attention on students who don't go to college."

"There isn't any question that young people can perform important work for society. But we haven't treated young people as responsible contributors; we have treated them as problems," says Halperin. "Now we have a government that looks at young people as resources and problem-solvers. That is a pretty healthy contribution."

"We are coming off a long era that said government can't do anything right, and into one that accepts the possibility that government can do some things right."

Heather Booth agrees, which brings me to good deed No. 10. Booth, a movement veteran, is currently working for the Democratic National Committee as the national outreach coordinator for the National Health Care Campaign. "Not only for the last couple of administrations but really for the last 20 years, progressive forces have been on the defensive," says Booth. "The

Clinton administration represents a new opening. The worst legacy of the past era has been the diminished belief that change was possible. When Kennedy was president, 75 percent of the population believed that government functioned in its interest most of the time; now that figure is 23 percent. With Clinton, there is a renewed hope for change, a redefinition of an appropriate role for government."

It's an engaging argument. And I would have heartily seconded it in this column—but then I saw a breakdown of Clinton's proposed 1995 budget. For the budget year 1995, Clinton is proposing to pour \$271 billion of the nation's discretionary spending into U.S. military and military-related corporations. This \$271 billion is \$20 billion more than the \$251 billion in discretionary funds Clinton has allocated for domestic spending.

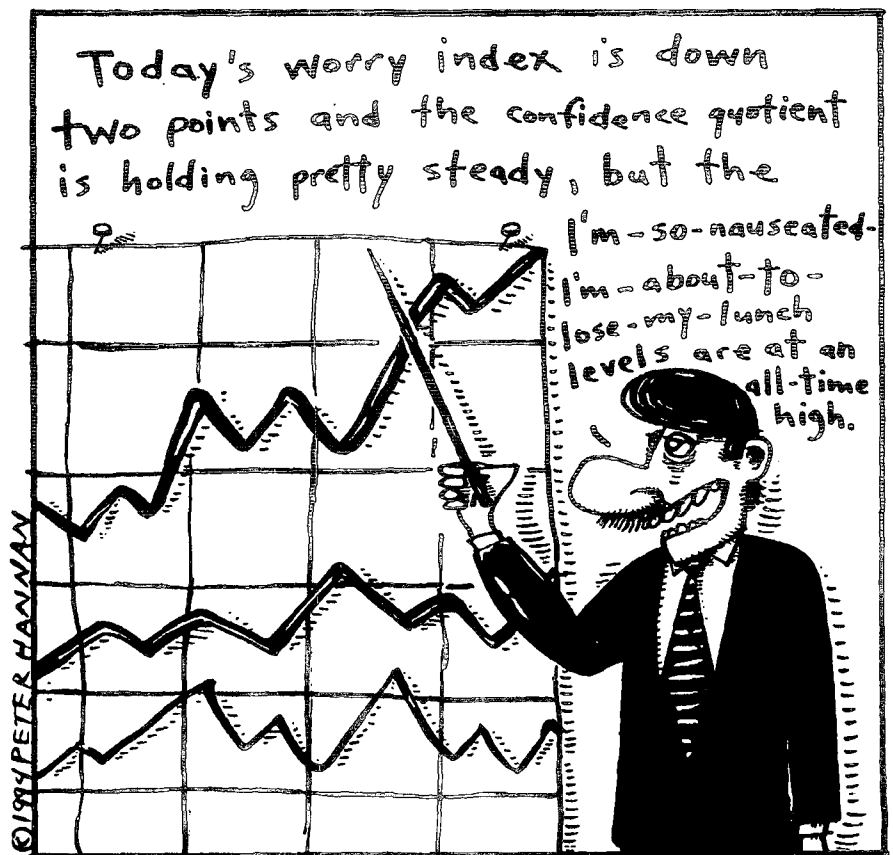
Let's compare that to the 1980 budget of President Jimmy Carter. Adjusting for inflation, Clinton proposes to spend \$36 billion more than the \$235 billion spent on defense in 1980. And recall that in 1980 we were in the middle of the Cold War—a war that ended several years ago.

At the same time, Clinton wants to slash funding for HUD's low-income housing program, for the development of mass transportation and for subsidies to help the poor pay heating bills.

I want to think positive, but Clinton makes it hard. ◀

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



FOREIGN POLICY

Time bombs

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ajor changes in the global order over the past quarter-century have led to a huge increase in unregulated financial capital and a radical shift in its use, from long-term investment and trade to speculation.

The effect has been to undermine national economic planning as governments are compelled to preserve market "credibility," driving economies toward what Cambridge University economist John Eatwell calls "a low-growth, high-unemployment equilibrium," with declining real wages, increasing poverty and inequality for the many, and profits for the few.

The parallel process of internationalization of production provides multinational corporations with new weapons to undermine

working people in the West. Workers must now accept an end to their "luxurious" lifestyles and agree to "flexibility of labor markets" (i.e., not knowing whether you have a job tomorrow). The return of most of Eastern Europe to its Third World origins enhances these prospects considerably. The attack on worker rights, social standards and functioning democracy reflects this new economic order. So does the current recovery in the United States—the first one in which wages are declining for most of the workforce, inequality is increasing, unemployment is scarcely changing and more than a quarter of new jobs are provided by temporary help agencies (one of which is now the nation's largest private employer, *Fortune* magazine reports).

The triumphalism among narrow elite sectors is quite understandable, as is the mounting despair and anger outside privileged circles.

The New Year's Day uprising of Indian peasants in Chiapas can be seen in this general context. The uprising coincided with the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The Zapatista army called NAFTA a "death sentence" for Indians, a gift to the rich that will deepen the divide between narrowly concentrated wealth and mass misery, destroying what remains of their indigenous society.

The NAFTA connection is partly symbolic; the problems are far deeper. "We are the product of 500 years of struggle," the Zapatista "declaration of war" stated. The struggle today is "for work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace."

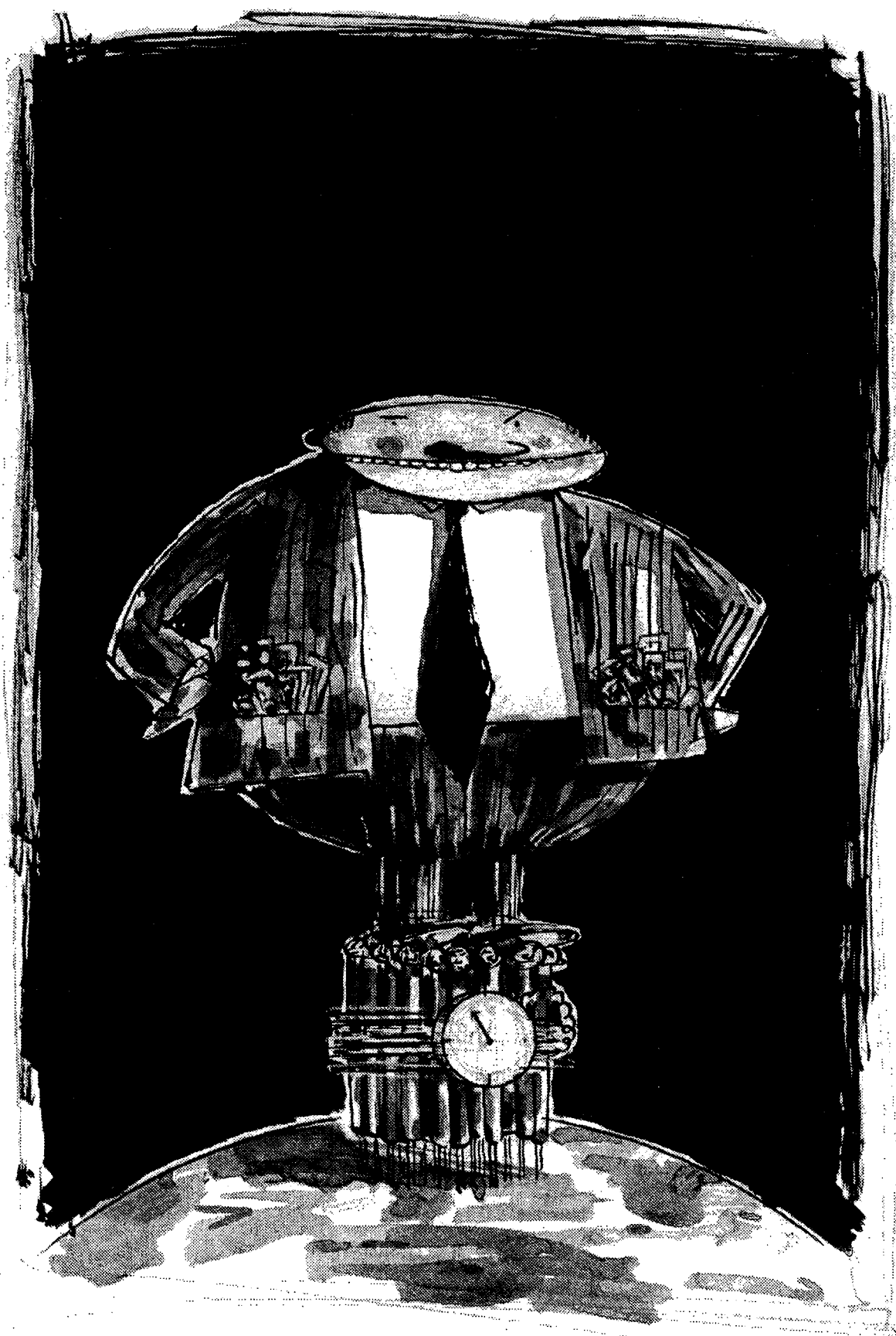
The Indian peasants are the most aggrieved victims of government policies. But their distress is widely shared. "Anyone who has the opportunity to be in contact with the millions of Mexicans who live in extreme poverty knows that we are living with a time bomb," Mexican columnist Pilar Valdes observes.

In the past decade of economic reform, the number of people in rural areas of Mexico living in extreme poverty has increased by almost a third. Half of the country's total population lacks resources to meet basic needs, a dramatic increase since 1980. Following World Bank-International Monetary Fund (IMF) prescriptions, agricultural produc-

Why the new global economy will trigger more explosions like Chiapas.

By Noam Chomsky

The following two essays explore the political economy of "free trade" and its effects on working people in the United States and around the world. In the first essay, noted linguist and political commentator Noam Chomsky traces the development of a "low-wage, low-growth, high-profit" global economy and the social polarization it has left in its wake. The Mexican rebellion, he argues, is likely to be but the first of many such explosions in years to come. In the second essay, Jody A. Wright brings the story closer to home, describing the effects of de-industrialization on the city of Flint, Mich.



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tion was shifted to export and animal feeds—a policy that benefited agribusiness, foreign consumers and affluent sectors in Mexico at the expense of the general population. Malnutrition became a major health problem, agricultural employment declined, productive lands were abandoned and Mexico began to import massive amounts of food. Real wages in manufacturing fell sharply. Labor's share in gross domestic product, which had risen until the mid-'70s, has since declined by well over a third.

These are standard concomitants of neoliberal reforms. IMF studies show "a strong and consistent pattern of reduction of labor share of income" under the impact of its "stabilization programs" in Latin America, economist Manuel Pastor observes.

The Mexican secretary of commerce hailed the fall in wages as an inducement to foreign investors. So it is, along with Mexico's repression of labor, lax enforcement of environmental regulations and the general orientation of social policy to the desires of the privileged minority. Such policies are naturally welcomed by the manufacturing and financial institutions that, with the assistance of mislabeled "free trade" agreements, are extending their control over the global economy.

NAFTA is expected to drive large numbers of workers off the land, contributing to rural misery and a surplus of labor. Manufacturing employment, which declined under the reforms, is expected to fall more sharply. A study by Mexico's leading business journal, *El Financiero*, predicted that Mexico would lose almost a quarter of its manufacturing industry and 14 percent of its jobs in the first two years after the enactment of NAFTA. "Economists predict that several million Mexicans will probably lose their jobs in the first five years after the accord takes effect,"

Tim Golden reported in the *New York Times*. These processes should depress wages still further while increasing profits and social polarization, with predictable effects in the United States and Canada.

A large part of the appeal of NAFTA, as its advocates have regularly stressed, is that it "locks in" neoliberal reforms. These reforms have reversed years of progress in labor rights and economic development, bringing mass impoverishment and suffering along with enrichment for the few and for foreign investors. To Mexico's economy generally, this "economic virtue" has brought "little reward," the London *Financial Times* observes. Mexico's "eight years of textbook market economic policies," the *Times* notes, produced only slight growth, most of it

attributable to unparalleled financial assistance from the World Bank and the United States. High interest rates have partially reversed the capital flight that was a major factor in Mexico's debt crisis, but debt service is nevertheless a growing burden, its largest component now being the internal debt owed to the Mexican rich.

Not surprisingly, there was substantial opposition to the plan to "lock in" this model of development. Historian Seth Fein, writing from Mexico City, described large demonstrations against NAFTA as "well articulated, if too-little-noticed in the United States, cries of frustration against government policies—involving repeal of ... labor, agrarian and education rights stipulated in the nation's popularly revered 1917 constitution—that appear to many Mexicans as the real meaning of NAFTA and U.S. foreign policy here."

A Nov. 1, 1993, "Communication of Mexican Bishops on NAFTA" condemned the agreement, along with the economic policies of which it is a part, because of their deleterious social effects. They reiterated the concern of the 1992 Conference of Latin American Bishops that "the market economy ... not become something absolute to which everything is sacrificed, accentuating the inequality and the marginalization of a large portion of the population."

The agreement was also opposed by many workers, including those in the largest non-governmental union. In the *Los Angeles Times*, Juanita Darling described the great anxiety that Mexican workers feel about the erosion of their "hard-won labor rights," which are likely to "be sacrificed as companies, trying to compete with foreign companies, look for ways to cut costs." Unionists and other critics warned of NAFTA's impact on wages, workers' rights and the

environment, the loss of sovereignty, the increased protection for corporate and investor rights, and the undermining of options for sustainable growth.

It has not taken long for such fears to be realized. Shortly after the NAFTA vote in Congress, workers were fired from Mexican Honeywell and GE plants for attempting to organize independent unions. This is standard practice. The Ford Motor Co. fired its entire Mexican workforce at one plant in 1987, eliminating the union contract and rehiring workers at far lower salaries. Brutal repression crushed protests. Volkswagen, with the backing of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), followed suit in 1992, firing its 14,000 Mexican workers and rehiring only those who renounced independent union leaders. These are central components of

The concept of efficiency, as defined by those of wealth and privilege, offers nothing to the growing sectors of the population that are useless for profit-making, and thus have been driven to poverty and despair. If they cannot be confined to urban slums, they will have to be controlled in other ways.

the "economic miracle" that is to be "locked in" by NAFTA.

A few days after the NAFTA vote, the U.S. Senate passed what Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) called "the finest anti-crime package in history." The legislation calls for 100,000 new police, high-security regional prisons, boot camps for young offenders, extension of the death penalty and harsher sentencing, as well as other onerous measures. But even law enforcement experts interviewed by the press doubted that the legislation would have much effect on crime, because it did not deal with the causes of social disintegration that produce violent criminals. Primary among these are the social and economic realities polarizing American society, which have been carried another step forward by NAFTA. The concept of "efficiency," as defined by those of wealth and privilege, offers nothing to the growing sectors of the population that are useless for profit-making, and thus have been driven to poverty and despair. If they cannot be confined to urban slums, they will have to be controlled in some other way.

Like the timing of the Zapatista rebellion, the legislative coincidence was of more than mere symbolic significance.

The NAFTA debate focused largely on job flows, about which little is known. But we can more confidently predict that wages will fall rather broadly. "Many economists think NAFTA could drag down pay, because lower Mexican wages could have a gravitational effect on the wages of Americans," Steven Pearlstein reported in the *Washington Post*. That is expected even by NAFTA advocates, who recognize that less skilled workers—about 70 percent of the workforce—are likely to suffer wage loss.

A *New York Times* review of the expected effects of NAFTA in the New York region reached similar conclusions. Gainers would be "the region's banking, telecommunications and service firms," including insurance companies, investment houses, corporate law firms, the PR industry, management consultants and the like. Some manufacturers, primarily in high-tech industry, publishing and pharmaceuticals, may also gain as a result of increased protection for intellectual property—protection designed to ensure that major corporations control the technology of the future. But there will also be losers, "predominantly women, blacks and Hispanics," and "semi-skilled production workers" generally; that is, most of the population in New York City, where 40 percent of the children already live below the poverty line, suffering health and educational disabilities that "lock them in" to a bitter fate.

Noting that real wages for production and non-supervisory workers have fallen to the level of the '60s, the congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), in an analysis of the executive version of NAFTA, predicted that unless significantly modified it "could further lock the United States into a low-wage, low-productivity future." Revisions proposed by the OTA, labor and other critics were mostly ignored.

The version of NAFTA that was enacted is likely to accelerate what the *Wall Street Journal* called a "welcome development of transcendent importance": the reduction of

U.S. labor costs to below the levels of all major industrial countries apart from England. (Until 1985, hourly pay for American workers had been higher than the other G-7 countries.) In a globalized economy, the impact is worldwide, as competitors must accommodate. GM can move to Mexico, or now to Poland, where it can find workers at a fraction of the cost of Western labor and be protected by a 30 percent tariff. Volkswagen can move to the Czech Republic to benefit from similar protection, taking the profits and leaving the government with the costs. Daimler-Benz can make similar arrangements in Alabama. Capital can move freely, and workers and communities suffer the consequences. Meanwhile, the huge growth of unregulated speculative capital imposes powerful pressures against stimulative government policies.

There are many factors driving global society toward a low-wage, low-growth, high-profit future, with increasing polarization and social disintegration. Another consequence is the fading of meaningful and democratic processes as decision-making is vested in private institutions and the quasi-governmental structures that are coalescing around them, what the *Financial Times* calls a "de facto world government" that operates in secret and without accountability.

These developments have little to do with economic liberalism, a concept of diminishing significance in a world in which a vast component of "trade" consists of centrally managed intrafirm transactions (which constitute half of all U.S. exports to Mexico, for example—"exports" that never enter the Mexican market). Meanwhile, private power demands and receives protection from market forces, as in the past. It was quite appropriate for President Clinton, at the Seattle Asia-Pacific summit, to offer as his model for the "free market" future the Boeing Corp., which would not be the country's leading exporter, nor probably even exist, were it not for the huge public subsidy from the Pentagon it has always received.

The protest of Indian peasants in Chiapas gives only a bare glimpse of time bombs waiting to explode, not only in Mexico.

Noam Chomsky is the author, most recently, of *The Prosperous Few and the Restless Many* (Odonian Press).

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L A B O R

End game

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y hometown of Flint, Mich., is a place that produces cars; human beings seem to live there as an incidental afterthought, mites crawling over the surface of the machine. The factories are so large that they require their own traffic lights and intersections. Many have rail lines leading right into them.

The city's sprawling subdivisions, where the workers live, cluster around the factories like honeycombs surrounding a queen bee's lair. The whole place seems stuck in the '50s, when

good jobs in big factories did not seem out of place. Unsurprisingly, in a town where cars are churned out like widgets, sidewalks are practically nonexistent. You have to drive to get anywhere. The houses have big, deep driveways to accommodate lots of cars, and even the small houses are separated from one another by large, unfenced yards.

Flint began life as a timber town, getting its name from the flint-colored river nearby. But most of the trees were chopped down, and the sawmills were replaced as the center of the town's activity toward the end of the 19th century by a prosperous carriage industry, the direct ancestor of the car factories that dominate most of Michigan today. "Flint," said Buick founder William Durant in 1905, "is in the center of the automobile industry, a progressive city, good people, with conditions for manufacturing ideal."

In a single year, 1909, Buick would throw up 1,300 new homes to house workers drawn by the highest factory wage in the

nation: 27 cents an hour.

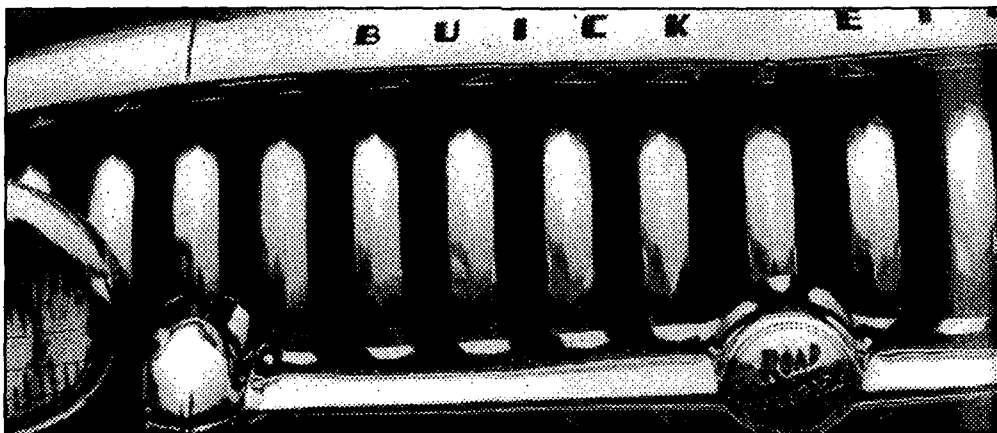
In 1903, the population was 14,000; by 1910 it had reached nearly 40,000. In 1919, GM formed a company called the Modern Housing Corporation; the company's sole purpose was to build homes for GM workers in Flint and other cities. It was around then that one GM executive described GM's paternal relationship to its workers: "I do not give a damn how much money we lost on those houses. What I consider of far greater importance is how much Buick, Chevrolet and Oakland have saved due to their workmen being properly housed."

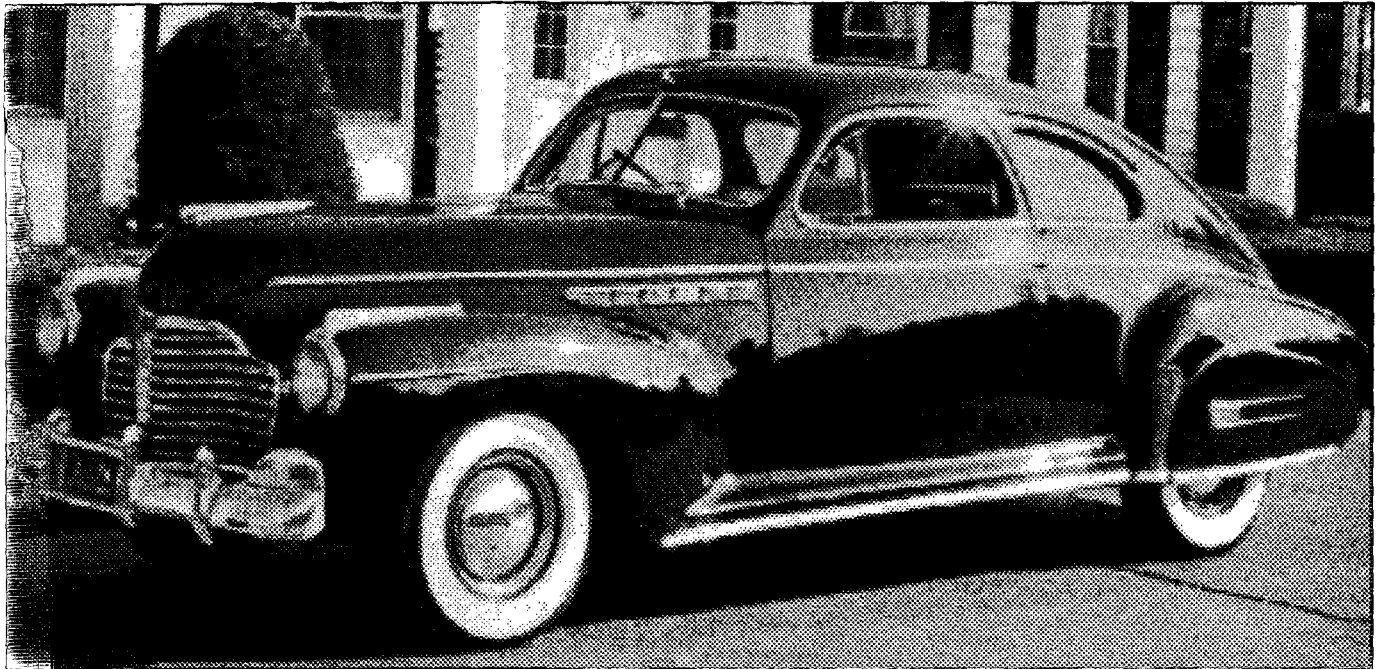
By the start of the Great Depression, Modern Housing had built approximately 4,260 dwellings in Flint, "creating solid houses and neighborhoods that survive to this day," in the words of one local historian.

It is difficult to imagine a modern executive talking up the importance of taking losses on building employees' houses, because such rhetoric is a bit too patriarchal. When exactly this sense of mutual engagement with one another's

Why do people choose to remain in post-industrial towns like Flint, Mich.?

By Jody A. Wright
FLINT, MICH.





welfare ended is difficult to say—it has a lot to do with the decline of GM's market share—but that the new mentality has sunk in is something no one disputes.

Of course, it wasn't always like this. Marie Hansmeyer, lifetime Flint resident and 30-year veteran of GM (though at 77 she's been retired for a while now) remembers when the people of Flint didn't need to lock their doors when they went out. Several years ago the city won the title of crime capital of the nation.

"This isn't the Flint I remember," she says. "When I grew up, Flint was a wonderful place to live. There was a downtown district with nice stores, and there was safe public transportation. I used to take the bus to the old IMA arena, where there were dances and all the big bands used to play. Why, I even saw Glenn Miller there once. But they don't have anything like that anymore."

It was here, in the margins of one of the most intricately self-contained modes of production the world has ever seen—with its front yards and stores and playlots in the shadow of the factories of the planet's largest company—that I grew up. I was born in Flint Osteopathic Hospital in 1971—born on August 22, but under the sign of GM. Three years earlier, in 1968, my father had received his draft notice. His father, a GM shop worker, couldn't afford to let him finish up a pre-med degree at Michigan State, and when he took time off to earn money for tuition he lost his draft exemption and ended up in Vietnam.

In the year after my father came back from Vietnam, while he was still in the service, my mother became pregnant with me. To support his growing family, my father got a job as a shop worker at one of GM's Buick plants in Flint. The ventilation at Buick City was so bad that Dad, a big, healthy three-sport athlete who won two Purple Hearts in Vietnam, decided to quit because it was ruining his health. I remem-

ber that my father, who never got ill, was sick all the time and coughed constantly. He finally quit and soon found a job repairing the machines that assemble spark plugs at the Flint AC Delco plant.

When GM began losing market share in the late '70s, my father was among the first to be laid off because he had been hired at AC less than a year before. When you get laid off in Flint, there is quite literally nothing you can do: all the jobs have something to do with GM, and they aren't hiring. I remember how humiliated my father was waiting in line for unemployment checks—he works more than 60 hours a week now to put me through school—and I remember how often my parents fought. It hurt both of them to tell us that we wouldn't get much for Christmas.

Why would anyone choose to remain in such a hopeless situation? The best answer is that many GM workers have no choice. Most are trained for labor no longer in demand, and they own houses they can't sell. No one wants to move into an area of high unemployment, high crime and few opportunities. For people like my father, whose GM roots go back two generations, it makes more sense to stick it out than to try to move away. It is not difficult to understand why these people do not get excited about the new jobs free trade is supposed to provide.

Perhaps, one could argue, the residents of Flint should have been aware of the fragile balance between their own lives and that of General Motors, and they should have anticipated the potential for disaster in such a relationship. "They think their jobs are going to be here forever," explains Chuck Frazier, 34, a 17-year GM veteran who now works at the Buick City plant my dad left so long ago. "But nothing's secure anymore. When I was hired, they just hired anybody and everybody. They hardly hire anybody now, and those lower seniority people—they're

going to be out on the street.”

But Frazier also knows that the decision to work for GM must have appeared reasonable for many people: You could bring home a decent paycheck, have a family, live a nice life in a pleasant Northern town. Even intelligent progressives like U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich point out that it is unrealistic to expect to receive high wages indefinitely for what is in many cases unskilled or semi-skilled labor—but the problem is, nobody had the foresight to tell this to the two or three generations of GM workers who decades ago bet their own and their families’ lives that this would not be the case.

Somehow, still, the idea lingers that there *is* a place for everyone, unskilled as well as skilled, high school graduates as well as college men, not in the world or in the United States, but in Michigan and even right here in Flint. Even the people who can leave generally choose not to, for reasons that have everything to do with uncommonly strong communitarian mores that have sadly outlasted the economic relations that produced them. Hovering over me is the expectation that by virtue of my expensive education I will do better economically than everyone who now languishes in Flint, but at the same time I am expected to settle down ultimately in a place where, everyone agrees, there are no good jobs.

In my high school class, three people out of nearly 300 went to college out of state: I went to the University of Chicago, one person went to Syracuse and one person went to a special school for the deaf in Tennessee. The rest stayed in Michigan, and the majority of them will (like virtually everyone in my extended family) spend the rest of their lives working in Flint or one of the cities very close to it. Some of them will end up at the General Motors Institute in Flint, which churns out engineers and management types at a frightening rate.

“Both my mother and father worked there, and just getting out of school in 1977 and looking at a fairly large paycheck—you can’t knock it,” explains Frazier, an intelligent, articulate man who probably would have had little trouble mastering the curriculum at a major college or university but who will almost certainly never attain anything beyond his high school degree.

“I mean, an 18-year-old getting out of school, working overtime, and grossing \$800 to \$900 a week—that’s a lot of money,” says Frazier. “Later, I tried going to college part time, but the overtime kicked in and I just stopped going. I did it without even thinking about it.”

This hiring pattern has been endemic to General Motors.

My parents recall “job fairs” from their high school days in the mid-’60s. The big paychecks at General Motors convinced many students to forgo college or even to drop out of high school.

“Yes, GM encouraged people, at least back then they did,” says Frazier. “There’s people in there that probably have an eighth-grade education, and they’re making \$1,000 a week. How could they say no?”

GM, by virtue of the high wages it offered in its flush times, attained a power over Flint and its residents that no person, let alone a corporation, ought to enjoy over any other person or group. GM can leave Flint whenever it likes, but the people of Flint cannot leave GM, not now nor in the near future. Both parties know this and GM uses this fact to

its advantage. Not long ago, a city just south of Flint persuaded GM to keep the local Chevy factory open with a series of tax breaks; GM accepted the handouts, then moved the plant to Mexico a few years later. Courts have recently overturned a ruling requiring GM to stick to the terms of its agreement; the company is free to open and close its plants as it chooses.

Even if all the plants left for good, the game would continue, albeit for different stakes. As proprietors of some of the few genuine growth industries in Flint, the owners of topless bars and sex shops recently suggested that the city rezone portions of several neighborhoods so that they could more easily expand their businesses. Their proposal has not been met with enthusiasm by many of the residents of these areas.

Another current proposal to rejuvenate Flint centers around the now defunct Auto World, the failed museum/theme park tribute to the love affair between Flint and General Motors. A Chicago developer has offered the city a deal in which Auto World would become a gambling casino. The deal is currently under consideration by city officials.

The power dynamic that sends city officials scrambling to curry favor with pimps and casino owners plays out in more subtle ways on the shop floor. When I asked for more detail about his work, Chuck Frazier said simply,

“They work your tail off. Every 51 seconds you’ve got a car coming by.” According to Frazier, GM plans to cut costs by adding an additional assembly line, doubling the number of cars put out by his plant and enabling GM to shut down a facility elsewhere.

He also described what is known among line workers as “the gray box,” a device used to speed up production on the assembly line without the workers’ knowledge. The “gray box” is located in the manager’s portion of the plant, and when a supervisor comes under pressure to meet higher pro-



***GM can leave
Flint, but the
people of Flint
can't leave GM.***

duction goals, he or she can use it to secretly speed up the assembly line.

"It's a notorious option—they've done it before," says Frazier. "But after a while, you know how long it takes to do your job."

By using tactics like these, General Motors is trying to squeeze as much labor as it can out of the remaining Flint workers. Everyone knows that GM now wants to destroy the relationship it created and has actively nurtured over the years, but they are helpless to fight back against the cruel patriarch on whom they still depend. Nearly everything in the desperate existence of a typical GM autoworker—from the home he lives in, to the car he drives, to his political views, to the nature of his education—is wrapped up with the company. It is not only heartless but actually slightly insane to suggest to people like my father and Chuck Frazier that perhaps it's time they got into something else.

General Motors is a screwed-up company today not because of "the unions" but because it pays absurdly bad executives absurdly good salaries and because for a long time it made poorly designed cars. The profitable Saturn division, with its pared-down bureaucracy and intelligent cars—built by 100 percent UAW labor—offers the most convincing evidence that GM should worry less about labor and more about product and management. The GM exec of 1919 who did "not give a damn" what it cost to house GM workers has been replaced by far more cynical—or shortsighted—men who don't give a damn about anything except the bottom line of their company, a company that is cheerfully paying them to perform the long and arduous task of running the world's largest corporation into the ground.

If the fundamental impulse behind collective life is the wish of ordinary people to gain more and more power over their lives, places like Flint suggest that our society has taken a frightening wrong turn—slipping as we are toward the time when large populations all over the world will be fed, clothed and housed (or not) at the whim of multinational corporations. The passage of NAFTA doesn't mean that people believe in the power of the "creative destruction" of late-20th-century capitalism to make our lives better; it's just our admission that we must play out to the bitter end a game we started but can no longer understand or control.

Stable jobs, extended families—everything that made Flint banal but decent, a democratic, deeply American place to live—are being pried from our grip in exchange for the tangible munificence provided by "market forces." But we should be constantly aware of the price we are being asked to pay. It remains to be seen how much longer Americans can worship at the altar of commerce and still sustain the illusion that our social life has not become pathologically greedy, uprooted and empty.

Jody A. Wright is a student at the University of Chicago. W. Herman Kelman contributed to this article, a longer version of which ran originally in Chicago's *Grey City Journal*.



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POLITICS

The most powerful lobby



hen the Business Roundtable made headlines recently for opposing the Clinton health plan, it was one of the rare times the group has received major media coverage. The Roundtable is little known outside Washington, but in two decades it has become the nation's most powerful lobby on economic issues, far surpassing in influence the AFL-CIO and the Chamber of Commerce. Its positions—which reflect the views of the biggest U.S. companies—have shaped the laws governing labor unions, corporations and financial institutions. It was the prime mover behind the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). And now the Roundtable is poised to significantly influence the kind of health care Americans receive.

The rise of the Business Roundtable reflects the decline of American pluralism. From the '30s through

the '60s, business had the loudest—but by no means the only—voice in government. Key decisions were also influenced by other competing interests, including labor, farmers, small business and professionals. In the '50s, economist John Kenneth Galbraith argued that government served to mediate between the “countervailing powers” of business and labor. But Galbraith could not make that claim today, when one voice increasingly drowns out the rest.

The Business Roundtable was founded in 1973 by John Harper, the head of Alcoa Aluminum, and Fred Borch, the CEO of General Electric. Harper and Borch were concerned about growing public hostility toward corporations—evidenced by support for government regulation of the workplace and environment—and about the power of unions to squeeze corporate profits in an increasingly competitive international market. On a trip to Washington, the two CEOs talked with John Connally, Nixon's secretary of the treasury, and Arthur Burns, the chairman of the Federal Reserve. Connally and Burns advised

them to set up a lobbying organization that would specifically represent large banks and corporations.

It hadn't been done before. Big business had its own organization, the Business Council, but the council did not lobby. In Washington, large banks and corporations lobbied on their own or through trade associations. They could also work through the Chamber of Commerce, but that organization was dominated by smaller firms.

For the most part, big banks and corporations maintained an amicable relationship with labor leaders, working together to raise the minimum wage and to introduce Medicare and other social legislation. But Harper and Borch now saw the need for a single lobbying organization that represented corporate America against the demands of labor unions, consumers and environmentalists. Economist Kim McQuaid later described it as a “super holding company for big business political influence.”

By design, the Roundtable was small and select—consisting of some 200 CEOs from the largest banks and corporations. Harper was the first president, followed by Thomas Murphy of General Motors, Irving Shapiro of Du Pont and Clifford Garvin of Exxon. From the beginning, the Roundtable enjoyed remarkable success. It played a key role in defeating an anti-trust bill in 1975 and a Ralph Nader plan for a Consumer Protection Agency in 1977. And it helped dilute the Humphrey-Hawkins full employment bill.

But the Roundtable's most significant victory was in blocking labor law reform. Increasingly stymied by employers who ignored the National Labor Relations Act, labor unions sought to strengthen labor law to make it more difficult for companies to intimidate workers who wanted to

The Business Roundtable is pitting its clout against the Clinton health plan.

By John B. Judis
WASHINGTON D.C.

form unions. Fearful of defeat, the AFL-CIO produced a timid bill that, after it was unveiled in 1977, passed the House easily and won the initial support of several large unionized corporations, including General Electric and General Motors. But the Roundtable voted to oppose the bill, and its members, including GM and GE, followed suit. Through its aggressive lobbying, it prevented the bill's Senate supporters from rounding up the 60 votes in the Senate necessary to withstand a filibuster.

The defeat of labor law reform signaled the end of New Deal-style pluralism in Washington. From then on, almost every major government economic initiative bore the distinct mark of the Roundtable. In fiscal policy, for example, the Roundtable was responsible for broadening Reagan's tax cut plan to include a sharp reduction in corporate taxes.

The Roundtable defined the reach of trade policy, which, it argued, should be focused on opening foreign markets to American trade and investment—but not on regulating either foreign investment in the United States or American overseas investment. The Omnibus Trade Act of 1988—identified with the Democratic Congress—in fact reflected most closely the thinking of the Business Roundtable. In 1990, the Roundtable urged George Bush to initiate a free trade agreement with Mexico. Last year, the Roundtable lobbied for NAFTA—and against any strong side agreements on labor and the environment. It provided the money and leadership for the main pro-NAFTA lobby, USA*NAFTA.

The Roundtable also continued to block economic reform efforts. During the Reagan and Bush years, it successfully opposed changes in corporate governance that would have made boards of directors and CEOs more accountable to stockholders. In 1986, the Roundtable convinced the Securities and Exchange Commission to forgo new rules on merger and acquisitions—rules that might have prevented the speculative bust of the late '80s. Last year, the Roundtable got Clinton to water down his plan to impose penalties on excessive executive salaries. Citicorp CEO John Reed, the chair of the Roundtable's Accounting Task Force, argued that Clinton's plan would have had "negative effects" on U.S. competitiveness. Don't ask how.

The Roundtable began sticking its nose into the health care debate during the Bush administration. Its Health, Welfare and Retirement Income Task Force, chaired by Prudential Insurance CEO Robert C. Winters, cheered Bush's anemic plan, which consisted mainly of subsidies to the health care industry. "The nation's health care system works well

for the majority of Americans," the Roundtable announced in a June 1991 statement. "We believe the solutions lie not in tearing down the present system, but in building upon it."

Last March, Winters presented the Roundtable's position before the White House Health Task Force. The group, Winters said, opposed requiring employers to insure their employees. It also opposed any price controls on insurance premiums or on doctor and hospital fees. "Quick fixes or illusory savings through price controls or government-imposed limits on health care spending will not work," Winters argued.

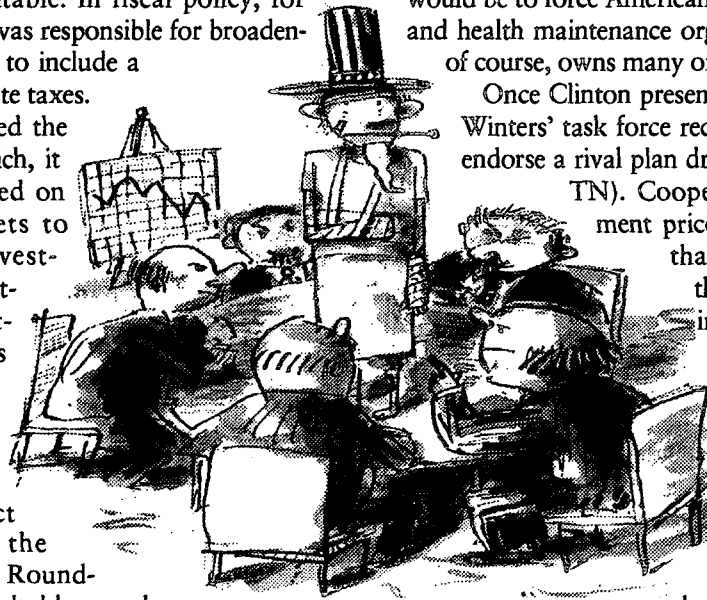
According to Winters, the main way to reduce costs would be to force Americans to join managed care networks and health maintenance organizations. Winters' Prudential, of course, owns many of these facilities.

Once Clinton presented his own health plan last fall, Winters' task force recommended that the Roundtable endorse a rival plan drawn up by Rep. Jim Cooper (D-TN). Cooper's bill would eschew government price controls; it would not require that employers buy insurance for their workers; and it would make insured employees pay taxes on benefits that exceed those of a bare-bones plan. Echoing Winters' position, Cooper's bill would cede direct control of health care to the large insurance companies.

After pleas from Clinton, the Roundtable delayed a final decision on endorsing a health plan until after the State of the Union address. On February 2, in spite of furious lobbying from the administration, the Roundtable came out in favor of the Cooper plan. GM, Southern California Edison and several other corporations had backed the Clinton plan, but it's not clear whether they'll break now from the Roundtable's line.

If the past is any guide, the Roundtable's opposition to Clinton's bill will convince the president that he must reach a compromise with Cooper—tossing aside price and premium controls, perhaps delaying indefinitely the employer mandate for small business. Like Jimmy Carter, who wooed the Roundtable's Irving Shapiro, Clinton has bowed and scraped before the Roundtable's leadership. Last June, in his address to the Roundtable's annual meeting in Washington, he described the organization's members as "the most enlightened leaders of our nation, in any walk of life."

After the Roundtable's rejection of his plan, Clinton merely expressed his "disappointment," rather than using the occasion to point out the narrow self-interest of the CEOs. One White House official explained that the president doesn't like to bash corporations and likes to govern by consensus. But the question raised by the Roundtable's clout is who really sets the terms of the consensus. It ain't you and me, babe.



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BLACK AMERICA

Farrakhan's dilemma

L

ouis Farrakhan's dismissal of Khalid Abdul Muhammad as a spokesman for the Nation of Islam (NOI) was both more and less than it seemed.

The most recent controversy reflects a split in the Nation of Islam.

By Salim Muwakkil

It was less, as most reports noted, because Farrakhan's mild rebuke of his aide served to amplify the vile anti-Semitic comments that sparked the controversy in the first place. Under the guise of an apology, the NOI leader paid homage to classic anti-Semitism by charging that Jews own the Federal Reserve, and he added a new dimension all his own with the absurd accusation that 75 percent of the slaves in the American South were owned by Jews.

The controversy arose from Muhammad's Nov. 29, 1993, address at Kean College in Union, N.J., in which he professed understanding for Nazi Ger-

many's treatment of Jews. He also urged the slaughter of all white South Africans, excoriated black leaders who differed from the NOI line, crudely ridiculed the pope and generally revealed a disturbingly racist view of the world. Those sweeping remarks were delivered with the kind of venom and snarling contempt that has made Muhammad such a hit on the college lecture circuit. African-American youth—and especially college students—seem to hunger for invective these days. The temperate, conciliatory messages of traditional black leadership rings no bells with the hip-hop generation. Muhammad's fierce persona reflects the tenor of these post-industrial times.

Bald-headed, with sharply chiseled features, luminous dark skin and a glowering expression, Muhammad is a menacing presence. The timbre and pitch of his speech is so similar to Farrakhan's that his voice is often mistaken for that of his boss (just as Farrakhan's voice reminds listeners of Malcolm X's). Muhammad's pronouncements can frequently be heard in the recordings of rapper

Ice Cube (O'Shea Jackson); in fact, he's prominently featured in Ice Cube's latest, *Lethal Injection*.

But Farrakhan's timid reproach of Muhammad is also more important than it seemed. It was the first public display of long-smoldering tensions within the Farrakhan wing of the NOI. There are several other groups that claim a stricter fidelity to the doctrine of "Messenger" Elijah Muhammad, the patriarch and supreme authority of the group until his 1975 death. Many of those groups argue that Farrakhan has mutilated the Messenger's teachings and thus is not fit for leadership.

And, in fact, Farrakhan's legitimacy is based on his fidelity to the doctrine of Elijah. That doctrine maintains that white people are a race of devils and black people inherently divine; that the NOI's founder, Master Farad Muhammad, was God in person and that Elijah Muhammad is His last messenger; that black and white people are incapable of getting along and thus must separate geographically; that unidentified flying objects are actually manned satellites of a mothership that will rescue only righteous black people from the upcoming apocalypse.

In his appearances before NOI audiences, Farrakhan ardently endorses those tenets. But there are some indications that he's less committed to some of the group's more outlandish beliefs than he appears to be. What's more, in his attempt to broaden the NOI's appeal, he certainly has de-emphasized "white devil" rhetoric in recent years.

Yet if Farrakhan were to deviate too far from NOI orthodoxy, his authority would immediately be challenged. Khalid Abdul Muhammad, however, is respected even by those who are skeptical of Farrakhan's intentions. It's there-

fore extremely important that the Farrakhan faction retain his allegiance. And Muhammad is one of the people most responsible for Farrakhan's current eminence.

When Elijah Muhammad died in 1975, Farrakhan and most other NOI members pledged fealty to Elijah's successor son, Wallace D. Muhammad. But after it became clear that Wallace was attempting to transform the NOI from a black nationalist sect into a group with more traditional Islamic beliefs, many members bolted. Among the first group of defectors was Khalid Abdul Muhammad.

Farrakhan had remained with Wallace, but during much of that period Khalid and several other former lieutenants of Elijah urged him to join them in rebuilding the black supremacist NOI. In 1977, he heeded their call—and he's been on the job ever since. Many seasoned NOI watchers contend that Farrakhan

originally was intended to be something of a front man for Muhammad and several other high-ranking officials in the NOI hierarchy. His eloquence and charisma were thought useful to the cause, but his authority would be provisional.

In the late '80s, Farrakhan began testing the limits of his authority when he altered some of the group's practices, including the prayer postures and the month of the Ramadan observance. But when even those minor changes sparked criticism from fundamentalists, he stepped back a bit.

The current controversy illustrates Farrakhan's dilemma. In some ways the flap over Khalid Muhammad's Kean College speech has afforded Farrakhan the opportunity to disassociate himself a bit from his volatile but popular aide. But if the NOI chief exhibits too much glee in demoting Khalid Muhammad, it may be interpreted as a power play—which would provoke a more overt kind of opposition from within the NOI.

With one eye on the fundamentalist forces Muhammad represents and another on the Congressional Black Caucus and mainstream acceptance, Farrakhan has been walking a treacherous tightrope. And although the media lately has lately been minimizing the NOI's influence, much is at stake. The NOI has an enormous influence in the African-American community. Jesse Jackson openly sought their support for his initial presidential venture because he knew that only the NOI could confer upon him the kind of racial authenticity he needed to be taken seriously among many

urban blacks. The group's influence among young African-Americans is singular; the NOI has been warmly embraced by the rap culture and many black college students.

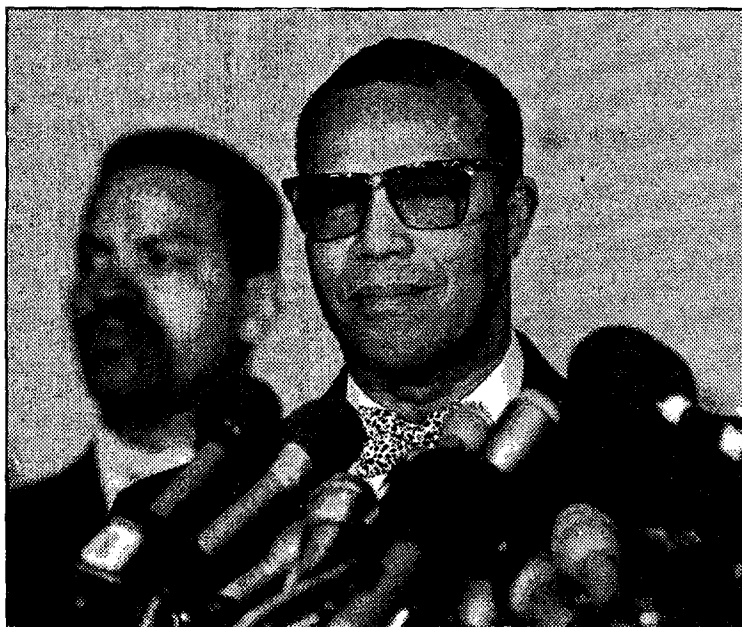
Farrakhan's "fiddle diplomacy" effort last year—in which the NOI leader publicly performed a concerto written by the Jewish composer Felix Mendelssohn (See *In These Times*, June 27, 1993)—was an attempt to cool growing animosity between his followers and Jewish groups. Farrakhan was particularly concerned about conflicts with more militant groups such as the Jewish Defense League. According to close observers, several extremely dangerous confrontations between the two sides have been narrowly averted. Farrakhan receives regular threats from militant Jewish groups, and many of the more volatile members of the NOI are urging the need for a pre-emptive strike.

Khalid Muhammad is also the champion of this internal faction, and his increasingly harsh rhetoric seemed to be fanning the fire. Farrakhan knows the dangers posed by an escalation to violence, but his credibility within the group would suffer if he appeared conciliatory on this matter. A Mendelssohn concerto was the next best thing.

The question now is whether Khalid Muhammad will accept his demotion. In many ways, this episode is reminiscent of the 1963 episode when Elijah Muhammad demoted and publicly silenced Malcolm X for not displaying the proper reverence for the assassinated president. Malcolm had indiscreetly described John F. Kennedy's assassination as simply a case of the "chickens coming home to roost," and Elijah promptly stripped him of his authority.

Malcolm was already a problem for Elijah Muhammad long before the Kennedy assassination. Malcolm had long been urging NOI leadership to become more actively involved in the black movement of that era. The hierarchy refused and watched warily as Malcolm took it upon himself to espouse a more activist role. He had been thoroughly alienated from the ruling circle before he was openly chastised.

Khalid Muhammad is no Malcolm X, but he is a charismatic figure who has a talent for stirring up trouble, and he's someone who has the respect of the NOI's most hardened soldiers. For now, Farrakhan needs Muhammad's support. But one day, the vitriolic aide may prove to be Farrakhan's major challenger. ◀



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LABOR

Buy the friendly skies

United Air Lines workers are purchasing the company. But that alone will not solve their problems.

By David Moberg

If workers don't like their company's future plans, what can they do about it? Members of the Pilots and Machinists unions at United Air Lines (UAL) recently decided that their best bet was to buy the business. Once flight attendants decide whether to participate in the buyout—which, though not a make-or-break element of the deal, seems likely—shareholder approval will be the only hurdle in the way of creating the nation's largest company with majority employee ownership.

The deal gives workers job security for more than five years and enough power on the board of directors to block dismantling of the airline, which is the apparent plan of current UAL chairman Stephen Wolf. But analysts say that the most successful employee-ownership programs are

those that also provide workers with increased on-the-job participation and power. And so far, the United plan does not include such workplace reforms.

If the plan goes through, which appears likely, workers will pay for their share of the company—from 53 to 63 percent, depending on the stock's performance—with roughly \$5 billion worth of wage and benefit cuts and freezes, work rule changes, and an agreement to create a new low-cost “airline within an airline.” As workers retire, they will be able to cash in their stock. That will gradually diminish worker ownership to less than 20 percent by 2010, when the unions will lose their special rights on the board. The plan is thus less a permanent change in corporate governance than an elaborate scheme for labor-cost savings that workers may recoup by sharing in later UAL financial gains.

Yet the unions will have the ability, if they stick together, to veto major corporate strategic changes, even though they have only two of the 12 director seats (three if the flight attendants join). This veto is what they've sought since United pilots first tried to buy the airline shortly after an angry strike in 1985. That dispute was fueled by a sense of management betrayal after earlier concessions. In 1990, a Machinist-Pilot buyout failed to get financing at the last minute and collapsed. This time the unions initiated their buyout bid as Wolf, after several years of losses, began selling off parts of the airline and undermining workers' jobs.

Despite union leaders' enthusiasm, there was substantial opposition among both pilots and members of the Machinists union to offering a fundamentally strong company such large concessions (16 percent pay cuts for pilots, 10 percent for workers in the Machinists union, probably less for flight attendants). Some critics argue that the United deal will simply unleash a new round of similar cost-cutting moves in the industry and undermine much of the competitive advantage United hopes to achieve. “What if everyone does the same thing?” speculates Chicago Machinist leader Michael Peat. “Then we're all back to where we were.”

On the other hand, many Wall Street analysts think the company should have wrung out concessions without giving up any stock. Moreover, some speculators still hold to the idea that their United stock would be worth more if the company were split and sold. But if shareholders reject this deal and management tries to break up United, “there will be war, something that would make World War III look calm,” vows Bobbie Pilkington, secretary-treasurer of the United flight attendants. Such turmoil would dramatically reduce any potential break-up value.

Wolf accelerated the dismantling this year by demanding union concessions. Machinists, who represent about 28,000 of United's 80,000 employees, saw a computer technician unit sold and cleaning work subcontracted. And then came the big bomb: the 5,000-employee United kitchens were sold to Dobbs International, which plans to cut pay from a middle-income \$14 an hour to poverty wages of \$7 an hour or less. United also talked of subcontracting its primary engine and aircraft maintenance work in San Francisco, and Machinists have been concerned that the company may shift maintenance work to a huge, low-cost facility opening in Tijuana.

While buyout talks were underway, Wolf set up a flight attendant base in Taipei, shifting 300 jobs away from U.S. citizens. He had already established London and Paris "domiciles" for 1,300 flight attendants and announced plans for a 600-worker unit in Hong Kong. Though covered by the Flight Attendants' contract, these global workers enter at the bottom rung and do not have the rights on the job of U.S. citizens.

Not everyone believed Wolf's saber-rattling, but in the end, "our people said this is a serious threat," Machinist leader Peat says. "The only way to stop it is by having control of the company."

How much real control will the unions have? The likely new chairman, former Chrysler executive Gerald Greenwald, will owe some initial allegiance to unions that got him his job. More importantly, major acquisitions, investments or sell-offs will require three-fourths of the board plus at least one union director.

The unions had grave doubts about United's insistence on forming an alternative airline—dubbed U2—that can match upstart Southwest Airline's low fares. Southwest's unionized employees earn wages roughly comparable to their United counterparts. But Southwest links short flights in direct, point-to-point routes that keep planes and crews flying much more of the time than do the hub-and-spoke operations of carriers like United. Ultimately, the unions concluded that their buyout could only satisfy management and Wall Street if they supported a U2 plan. To avoid cannibalizing United, they limited U2's scope; it can only be used on flights of 750 miles or less, currently about 15 percent of United's trips.

The new operation will not be intrinsically less desirable. Flight attendant Pilkington said employees don't enjoy the inefficiency and dead time in the current system. "Part of United's problem is not something that labor can fix," she says. "It's the way we fly. The hub-and-spoke system is cumbersome and inefficient."

Worker ownership is supposed to bring United new efficiency, as well as the 20 percent payroll cost savings up front. Yet employee ownership by itself has little impact on company performance, according to Corey Rosen, director of the National Center for Employee Ownership. Most studies show that what makes employee ownership pay off are effective channels for employee

participation in managing the work.

So far, nobody at the unions or management is seriously talking about new structures of employee involvement or control. A UAL corporate spokesman wouldn't even talk about participation. And Pilot union spokesman Capt. Herb Hunter said, "There won't be any employee decision-making in the business. It will run the way it always did. We'd see our representative [on the board] as providing our involvement."

But Dennis Hitchcock, communications director for the big San Francisco Machinist local, argues, "Employee ownership doesn't solve any problem, financial or otherwise. In an intensely service-oriented business like an airline, the employees will have to be very directly involved." That's why getting the 19,000 flight attendants on board is important even if the deal doesn't financially depend on them.

Minority employee ownership is not unusual in the airline industry. Now employees own 45 percent of TWA and 30 percent of Northwest, as well as parts of Southwest, Delta, US Air and other airlines. Many airlines that have failed financially—Eastern, Pan Am, Western, for example—also had large minority employee stakes. If United's plan succeeds it could, ironically, devastate weak carriers like TWA and Continental, along with their employee-ownership plans.

In most employee stock ownership plans, whatever the industry, workers have only a minority stake. Often the plans have been introduced by management to replace a retiring owner, gain tax advantages, or protect the firm from hostile takeovers. Despite the publicity they get, relatively few cases involve workers buying a business threatened with closure.

In contrast with minority-ownership and company-initiated plans elsewhere, United "is the first major instance of employees initiating the purchase of a healthy company," Rosen says. Its success could provide "another arrow in the quiver of unions for whom strikes have become unwieldy and inefficient methods of gaining influence."

Employee ownership does not address the structural problems of the industry, which have led to massive losses by most carriers. The unions argue that those structural problems can only be addressed by the government. At the very least, the unions want some kind of re-regulation to prevent cut-throat competition. Pilkington argues that with \$3 trillion in public investment in airline infrastructure, the air transport industry should be regarded as a utility and be regulated for the public good.

But Pilkington has doubts about the buyout's overall effect on workers: "One concern is whether we are doing something on the cutting edge or merely ratcheting down pay scales in the industry. I don't know the answer."

Employee ownership will at least give workers some voice in how that ratcheting down occurs, Rosen argues. That is not a trifling matter, but it is a caution about how much employee ownership can be hoped to provide United workers.

EUROPE

Left in the cold

The West's failure to adopt new security structures leaves former communist nations in limbo.

By Paul Hockenos
BERLIN

The people of East Central Europe have a deep ambivalence toward the West. Liberals have long identified with Western Europe and aspired toward Western ideas of civilization and culture. Nationalists have traditionally resented the West, which they see as soulless in its pursuit of progress and wealth, a corrupting influence on their rich national cultures. But no matter who you ask, all Central Europeans agree that the West has treated them poorly, abandoning them in their moments of greatest need.

The two infamous symbols for the West's indifference toward *Mittleuropa* are the 1938 Munich Conference and the Yalta agreement in 1945. On both occasions, the Western powers let expansionist, totalitarian regimes—Hitler's Germany in the case of Munich and the

Soviet Union at Yalta—determine the fates of the small Central European countries. If Brussels fails to take a place in history alongside Munich and Yalta, it is only because the West forsook post-communist Central Europe well before the NATO summit there in January. In a desperate tone, the young democracies implored the West to take notice of their dire situations, and to act decisively with all of the means at its disposal. Yet, once again, the West turned its back.

The security problems of Eastern Europe would have topped the NATO agenda even if the Greater Russian nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy hadn't had his spectacular success in the Russian elections only a week previously. Zhirinovskiy's triumph simply underlined the volatile, unpredictable nature of post-communist politics. Since the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and then of the Soviet Union, Moscow's former charges have floated in a security limbo between the superpowers, without new structures to replace the defunct Warsaw Pact.

Some countries border the unstable nuclear giants, Russia and the Ukraine, while others lie alongside war-torn former Yugoslavia. From the Baltics to the Balkans, neighboring states that were socialist allies a few years ago are today, once again, enemies. The entire region is a potential battlefield, and, lacking security structures, the law is every nation for itself.

Although it is difficult to remember now, there was a time just after the "democratic revolutions" of 1989 when an alternative to both Cold War bloc thinking and survival-of-the-fittest nationalism was in the air. Men of vision such as Mikhail Gorbachev and Vaclav Havel spoke of a common European house, a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals integrated through supranational institutions and united around democratic values.

The vehicle of the new order was to be the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), a pan-European institution founded in 1975 to facilitate cooperation between Eastern and Western Europe. An empowered CSCE, with a broader manifesto, would have been the ideal body to devise and implement a new European security system. It could have embodied the goal of a democratic, multinational Europe, with the military resources and will to see it through.

But the Western powers showed little interest in such a dramatic overhaul of the status quo, which naturally would have shifted power from their hands. NATO, the European Union (EU) and the Western European Union are all children of the Cold War, and have refused to redefine their mission now that the conflict is over. As Lech Walesa noted before the Brussels summit: "NATO and the EU proceed in their old manner and along their old paths as if the collapse



Europeans above all want to avoid isolating Russia and fueling Russian nationalism. Yet Boris Yeltsin's opposition to the inclusion of former Warsaw Pact allies into NATO was also a convenient excuse for the Western leaders, who, regardless of Russia's position, had nothing in terms of alternative policy ideas to offer Eastern Europe. For the alliance, the simple possibility of expansion opens an entirely new set of questions, which it appears in no position to address.

Even if one counts out full NATO membership for interested newcomers at the moment, the West could do much more to provide the Central European and Baltic states with real security guarantees. The process of integrating their military systems into that of the Atlantic alliance, a prerequisite for membership in any case, could be set in motion.

Or, as a compromise, interested countries could be granted associate member status, if they meet democratic and human rights criteria.

At the very least, NATO could have sent these states the clear message that it takes their predicaments seriously, and that they will not be left in the cold again, as they have been in the past, and as Bosnia is today.

In 1990 and 1991, all of the former communist countries explicitly broke with the past, albeit to different degrees, to take up Western versions of parliamentary democracy and market capitalism. It took a great leap of faith, and perhaps they were naive to expect miraculous results, or generous assistance from the West. But naive or not, the feeling of betrayal is widespread, and plays directly into the hands of undemocratic forces. Leaving Eastern Europe so on its own creates a scenario that encourages nationalism and increases the likelihood of conflict. When countries feel threatened they respond defensively, nationalistically and irrationally.

An unintegrated Europe is one ripe for nationalist demagogues to exploit in a time of crisis and uncertainty. And when such demagogues brand the West as an arrogant, hypocritical neighbor, their charges will bear more than a grain of truth.

Paul Hockenros is the author of *Free to Hate: The Rise of the Right in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Routledge).

of communism had changed nothing on the international stage."

The Central Europeans have done their best to build ersatz structures—like the Visegrad Alliance between Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, and the Alpine-Adriatic Group, which links together parts of Germany, Austria, Hungary and Italy for cooperative economic efforts. But enforceable security arrangements are beyond the limited scope of such regional pacts. In terms of security, the Central Europeans currently have no alternative to NATO.

In Brussels, NATO's overtures to the new democracies had little meaningful content. President Clinton's Partnership for Peace plan offers them neither full membership nor the promise of future membership—nor even concrete security guarantees.

Instead of a collective European security policy, NATO held fast to its original *raison d'être*—the defense of Western interests. Meeting with Clinton in Prague, the Visegrad states had no choice but to accept the president's vague declarations and non-binding promises. They did so unhappily, no doubt with Yugoslavia in mind.

On the one hand, NATO was certainly right to listen to Russian objections to an expanded NATO. The Central

EDUCATION

In the spirit of Thomas Paine

By Bob Peterson

It is ironic that although technology has made it possible for anyone with a computer and something worth saying to be a publisher, there are fewer and fewer alternative journals to be found. Most of the reasons are political. Alternative pamphlets, newspapers and magazines need an alternative movement to support them.

But I sometimes wonder if there isn't more to it. It may also be that people are intimidated by the thought of glossy magazines or books requiring million-dollar budgets and national distribution networks. They realize that unless they are extremely rich or well-connected it would be best not to even entertain such fantasies.

There's an alternative to expensive publishing projects, however, and one that is available to most people with a computer, some basic writing skills and a willingness to put in some extra hours. I'm not talking about starting a newspaper or magazine, which

require a high degree of expertise and sophistication to keep alive. I'm talking about the benefits of inexpensive, magazine-style pamphlets.

Books and full-color glossy magazines are often expensive and take too long to publish, while newspapers have a limited life. Pamphlets, on the other hand, can usually be produced relatively inexpensively, especially if published on newsprint. Pamphleteering has an honorable tradition in the United States, from the revolutionary

Changing public schools—and the world—can begin with a Xerox machine.

pamphlet *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine in 1776, to the abolitionist screed *Walker's Appeal* by David Walker in 1829.

The importance of pamphleteering and low-budget publications has been brought home to me through my experience with *Rethinking Schools*, a tabloid newspaper published four times a year, and with our pamphlet-style special issues, *Rethinking Columbus* and *False Choices: Why School Vouchers Threaten Our Children's Future*.

In all three cases, our goal was to publish and distribute as many copies as possible, not to make money. In all three cases, we used inexpensive newsprint and deliberately set prices as low as possible. In all three cases, we have been successful beyond our expectations.

First, a little about *Rethinking Schools*. The Milwaukee-based quarterly newspaper is published in a tabloid format, with a press run of about 40,000 copies per issue. The paper is distributed free within the Milwaukee area, and has a nationwide subscription base of about 5,000 individual subscriptions and about 6,000 bulk-order subscriptions. Decisions are made by our all-volunteer editorial board of classroom teachers and educators. Our goal has remained consistent since our founding: to give teachers and parents a voice in reforming our public schools, and to change both classroom practice and educational policies so that we might help ensure a quality public education for all children.

People often ask me about *Rethinking Schools*. Some are interested in the novelty of an independent grass-roots newspaper published by teachers for teachers. Others are interested in the publication's organizing and advocacy role. Yet others are curious because of the accolades we have received from nationally known writers such as Jonathan Kozol. And then there are

those who are bemused by our fierce activism, as we proudly carry on the best of what we believe the '60s had to offer, albeit with slightly grayer hair.

We knew that if we were serious about trying to reform the Milwaukee public schools, we needed a newspaper to help us organize. Eight years ago, *Rethinking Schools* was little more than an idea and a collection of typewritten articles about to be pasted up on a kitchen table at 2 a.m. as we rushed to meet our printer's deadline. The paper started, literally, without any real budget, kept alive by hours of volunteer help and a few donations from friends and family to pay the printer for 6,000 copies. These copies, in turn, were distributed free to Milwaukee-area teachers and parents.

When I look back over the eight years, two lessons stand out that might be useful to other teachers and activists. One is the importance of maintaining a clear political focus. Since its founding, *Rethinking Schools* has consistently emphasized issues of equity, particularly as they affect urban public schools. The other lesson is that teachers and activists should reconsider the value of old-fashioned pamphleteering as a viable tactic in this high-tech world. Although I had been convinced of this through my experience with *Rethinking Schools*, the unanticipated success of our special issue *Rethinking Columbus* underscored my belief in pamphleteering.

A 96-page collection of articles, essays, poems resources and teaching suggestions about Columbus and his legacy, *Rethinking Columbus* was deliberately priced low so teachers, parents, activists, school districts and community organizations could afford to buy it. While single copies were \$4, bulk orders were as low as 50 cents each.

We published 30,000 copies in the fall of 1991 and held our breath, fearful that we would be forced to recycle thousands of leftover copies. Within the month we had sold out our first printing—and within 18 months we had sold over 200,000 copies. When the conservative *San Francisco Chroni-*

cle printed an editorial praising the pamphlet—despite its sharp critique of Columbus—it was clear that *Rethinking Columbus* had reached into the mainstream and had influenced the popular debate.

Our latest special issue, *False Choices: Why School Vouchers Threaten our Children's Future*, has also been a success. With sales of over 20,000 copies, the pamphlet has become the most widely available critique of the voucher movement.

I have no doubt that our prices were a key factor in our sales and, ultimately, our influence. I often wonder: if we had decided to make money rather than get the word out, if we had charged two or three times as much, would these pamphlets have been so successful? I don't think so. But price is not everything, nor should it be. We have also been careful to provide easy-to-read articles, accessible to "experts" and non-experts alike, and to design our publications with quality photos and graphics.

I'm glad *Rethinking Schools* has survived and prospered. But even if we had only published one issue, I wouldn't be upset; we would have at least tried to do something.

I remember once listening to Amiri Baraka at a poetry reading. He said that people always complained to him that there was nothing they could do about racism. Such claims, he suggest-

ed, were nonsense. Anyone with access to a Xerox machine can do something, even if it is only reproducing a worthwhile essay to give to a friend.

Publishing a pamphlet is different than xeroxing an essay. But the idea is fundamentally the same. The most important thing is deciding to just do it. ◀

Bob Peterson is a co-founder and editor of *Rethinking Schools*, 1001 E. Keefe Ave., Milwaukee, Wis., 53212. Special thanks to Barbara Miner for her help in writing this article.

This article is part of a continuing series on education edited by Alex Molnar, a professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The series, "Notes From the Back of the Class," covers a wide range of education-related issues. Contributions from readers are welcome. Manuscripts of no more than 1,000 words should be sent to Alex Molnar c/o In These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

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I N T H E A R T S

Naked truth

Mike Leigh's *Naked* is the antidote to the Merchant-Ivory view of England. The producer-director team that fashioned *Howards End* and *A Room with a View* isn't just on the other side of the island from Leigh—it's on the other side of the looking glass. There's not a trace of genteel Britain left in Leigh's snarling comic portrait of a drifter in the debris of Thatcherized England.

Mike Leigh's new film explores the bleak reality of post-Thatcher Britain.

By Pat Dowell

Leigh's most popular films in the United States, *Life Is Sweet* and *High Hopes*, have perhaps led American audiences to expect from this highly original writer-director an eccentric and bittersweet view of workaday Brits. *Naked*, however, reverts to the style of Leigh's bleak comedies that came before those two trans-Atlantic hits. It is all bitter and no sweet.

The film begins in the

middle of an ugly sexual encounter in an alley in Manchester—perhaps a rape, although it looks more like just another sour, anonymous rendezvous of the sort that Johnny (David Thewlis) will have many times in the next few days. The woman runs off hurling unintelligible curses at him, and Johnny staggers off and steals a car, which he drives to London. There he hangs out in the flat of a former girlfriend, Louise (Lesley Sharp).

While waiting for her to come home, Johnny taunts and ultimately shacks up with her roommate Sophie (Katrin Cartlidge), a blinking, stuporous druggie whose survival in the world is a constant source of amazement in the movie.

Johnny is the last person in the world you'd want to come home to. But to watch him from the relative safety of this side of the screen is an experience in bizarre fascination. Wiry, unkempt, unsteady, Johnny is a scary guy spewing a nonstop line of philosophical contempt for the human condition, including his own. He offhandedly refers to the body as a "pink, wet factory" in one stream-of-con-

sciousness conversation, and describes himself as "on the run"—from what? He's a renegade, a stand-up philosopher, and you're relieved for both Louise and Sophie when he wanders out into the London streets because, well, because he just can't stay put.

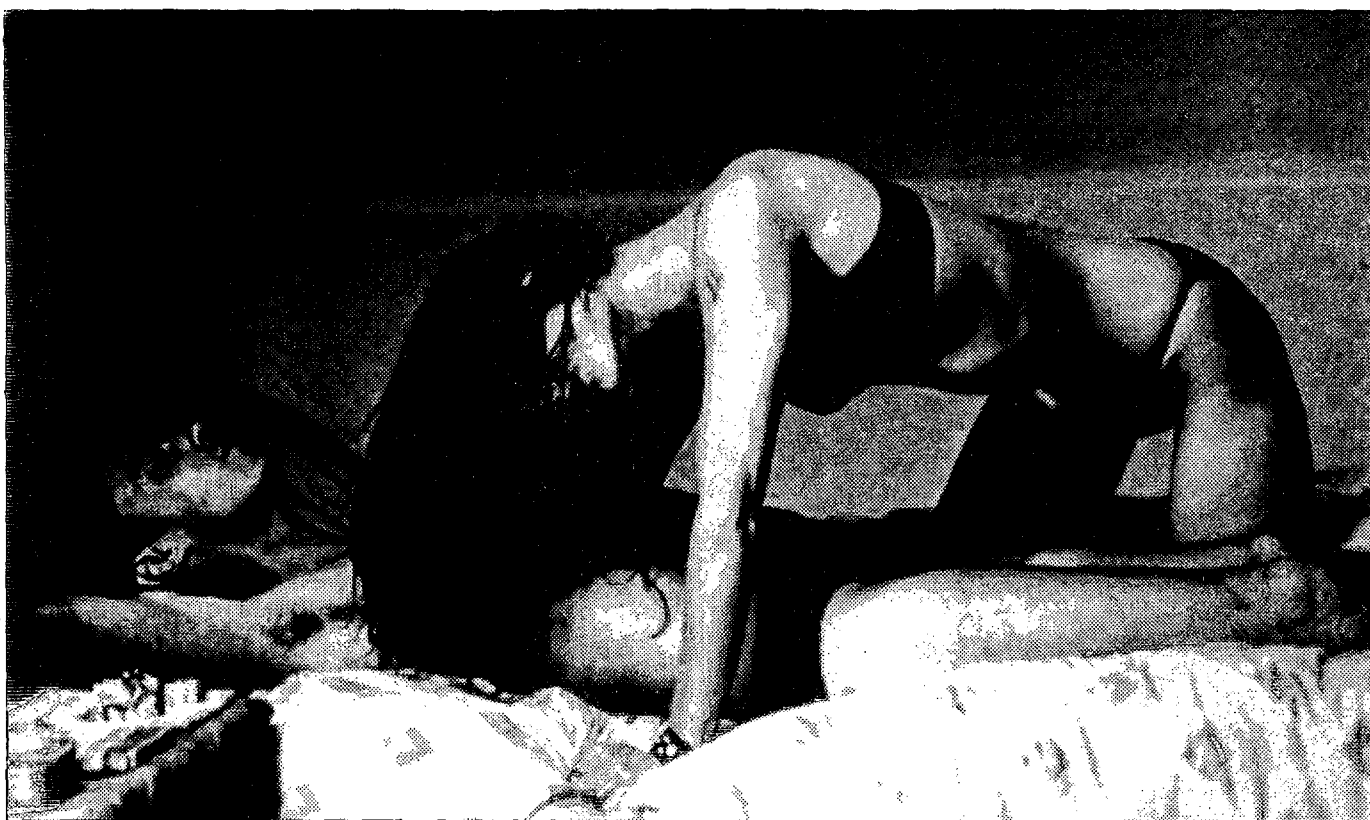
Out there, Johnny stumbles upon a battling Scottish couple spewing indecipherable rage at each other, but hilarious in that sardonic, hopeless way that Leigh has mastered and made his trademark. "I wonder what it's like to be you," Johnny muses to the drunken male of this terrible twosome. It's a question that ricochets all around Leigh's challenging, eerie movie—but we ask it of Johnny himself.

Pursuing whatever appears before his eyes, Johnny is a metaphysical midnight rambler, walking through the ruins of England. "Do you know that wherever you are in London, you're only 30 feet from a rat?" he informs an acquaintance. The city is not a hospitable place, either on the street, where Johnny gets stomped by roving toughs, or in



Naked
Directed by Mike Leigh

PHOTOS: SIMON MEIN/ FINE LINE FEATURES



the homes of various emotionally desperate characters who rather unwisely take Johnny in—briefly, in every instance. As he replies to someone who asks him if he has a place to go, there are “an infinite number of places to go, the problem is where you stay.”

Johnny often speaks such unhinged truths, like one of rogue psychiatrist R. D. Laing’s schizophrenics from the ’60s, madmen who say the terrible things all of us know but dare not voice. Perhaps that’s why the film is entitled *Naked*, for Johnny has sandpapered off of himself most of the social niceties that make a human being fit to live with.

Let into a fancy, sterile office building by a lonely night watchman, Johnny querulously muses, “So what goes goes on in this postmodern gas chamber?” The two proceed to indulge in an extended conversation about life, capped by Johnny’s spectacular flight of mad fancy, wherein he establishes that the universal bar code is actually the apocalyptic sign of the beast foretold in the Bible.

Then Johnny is off again on one of his anti-intimate bouts of sex, this time talking himself into a lonely woman’s apartment. Jolted by Johnny’s violent gestures, by a frightening sense of his appetite for sex as impersonal connection, and by his brutal and conspicuous lack of interest in her, she sends him on his way. Likewise jolted, some critics have accused Mike Leigh of glorifying a brute in making a movie about Johnny. The fact that David Thewlis’ brilliant performance—mostly improvised, as is customary in Leigh’s films—has won him several awards has increased the clamor against *Naked*. To the morally myopic among us, that must seem like rewarding bad boy Johnny and his creator.

It seems uncomprehending to accuse Leigh of misogyny—misanthropy is more like it. No human being looks very noble in *Naked*, but its most sympathetic characters are all women. If anyone is admirable or sane in the film, it’s Louise, who feels affection for the man she imagines is quivering inside Johnny’s armor of bravado. (In her eyes he’s not naked at all, just the opposite.)

The men are all cruel and/or unfeeling, hardly champions or heroes. The best they get is innocuous—the nightwatchman—and the worst they get is far more frightening than Johnny himself. There’s a parallel subplot about Louise and Sophie’s landlord Jeremy (played by Greg Cruttwell, who is a ringer for actor Dirk Bogarde in all those imperious young Brit roles he played in the ’50s and ’60s). This guy’s a sadist who rapes Sophie and practically holds the two women hostage in their own flat. Inevitably he crosses paths with Johnny; the results are unexpected.

Clearly, *Naked* does not offer Johnny up as a positive role model, an absurd notion, nor does the movie “excuse” him as the product of an oppressive social system. Leigh is not a director who refrains from making judgments about his characters; upper-class twits and middle-class Thatcherites have been objects of ridicule and cold contempt in his movies.

Johnny is an appalling creature, too. He is a mystery of misogynist hostility but also of self-abnegation; he is his own worst enemy. He’s not the cardboard villain he’s made out to be by Leigh’s detractors. Life is more complicated than that, they should learn, and so is the politics of image-making.

I N P R I N T

The briefcase Gestapo

By Roger Kerson

Years ago, when a boss wanted to break up a union he would send in some muscle. The idea was to “educate” workers by cracking a few heads, thereby demonstrating that membership in a trade union might be hazardous to one’s personal welfare.

These days, executives dislike unions as much as ever, but industrial warfare has become far more genteel. The goon squads are gone, replaced by armies of attorneys and consultants who work overtime to defeat unions by stretching the limits of the law—and sometimes by breaking it outright.

Workers supposedly have the right to choose whether or not to join unions in free, democratic elections. Currently, unions win about half of all scheduled representation elections. That record would be far better if it weren’t for management consultants who manipulate the process. “These guys,” said a veteran union official at a conference I attended a few years ago, “are like the Gestapo—with briefcases.”

Marty Levitt spent 20 years as a briefcase-wielding field commander in management’s war against organized labor. In 1988, racked by alcoholism, a disintegrating personal life and a guilty conscience, Levitt came in from the cold. He quit the union-busting business and hit the lecture circuit to denounce his former colleagues. As a recovering alcoholic, Levitt is committed to confronting the inner demons that led him to drink in the first place. His book, *Confessions of a Union Buster*, is, in part,

an attempt to exorcise a past he is not particularly proud of by laying it open for public inspection. The result is a fast-moving, illuminating account of a little-known branch of industrial espionage—recounting the extraordinary measures that managers will take to prevent workers from voting in favor of union representation.

I’ve spent most of the past decade as a researcher, writer and publicist for organized labor. From my point of view, Levitt’s book is a rare opportunity to peek behind enemy lines. As a practicing propagandist, a large part of my job is to claim the moral high ground for my side while depicting the opposition as greedy, uncaring and corrupt. According to Levitt, every horrible thing I ever thought, wrote or imagined about corporate executives and their high-priced consultants is true—and then some.

“Union busting is a field populated by bullies and built on deceit,” writes Levitt. “A campaign against a union is an assault on individuals and a war on the truth. The only way to bust a union is to lie, distort, manipulate, threaten and always attack. ... The consultants are terrorists. Like political terrorists, the consultants’ attacks are intensely personal. ... They invade people’s lives, demolish their friendships, crush their will, and shatter their families.”

Levitt’s memoir will surely be juicy ammunition for union organizers, who can wave it as “proof” that bosses are dirty rotten scoundrels. But how can a disinterested observer trust anything Levitt says? He is, after all, a confessed (former) terrorist who built his career on lies.

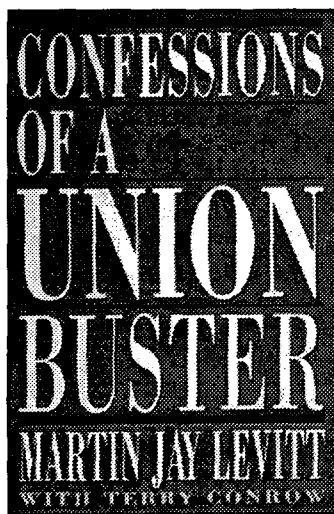
This sort of problem must come up all the time for people who work in the counterespionage section of the CIA.

But it’s not something those of us in the labor movement have to worry about very much. We don’t get too many turncoats from the other side; the pay is so much better in management. (Levitt, as a matter of fact, reports that he briefly switched sides once before and spent a few months as a union organizer—but he didn’t last because the work was too hard and the expense accounts too small.)

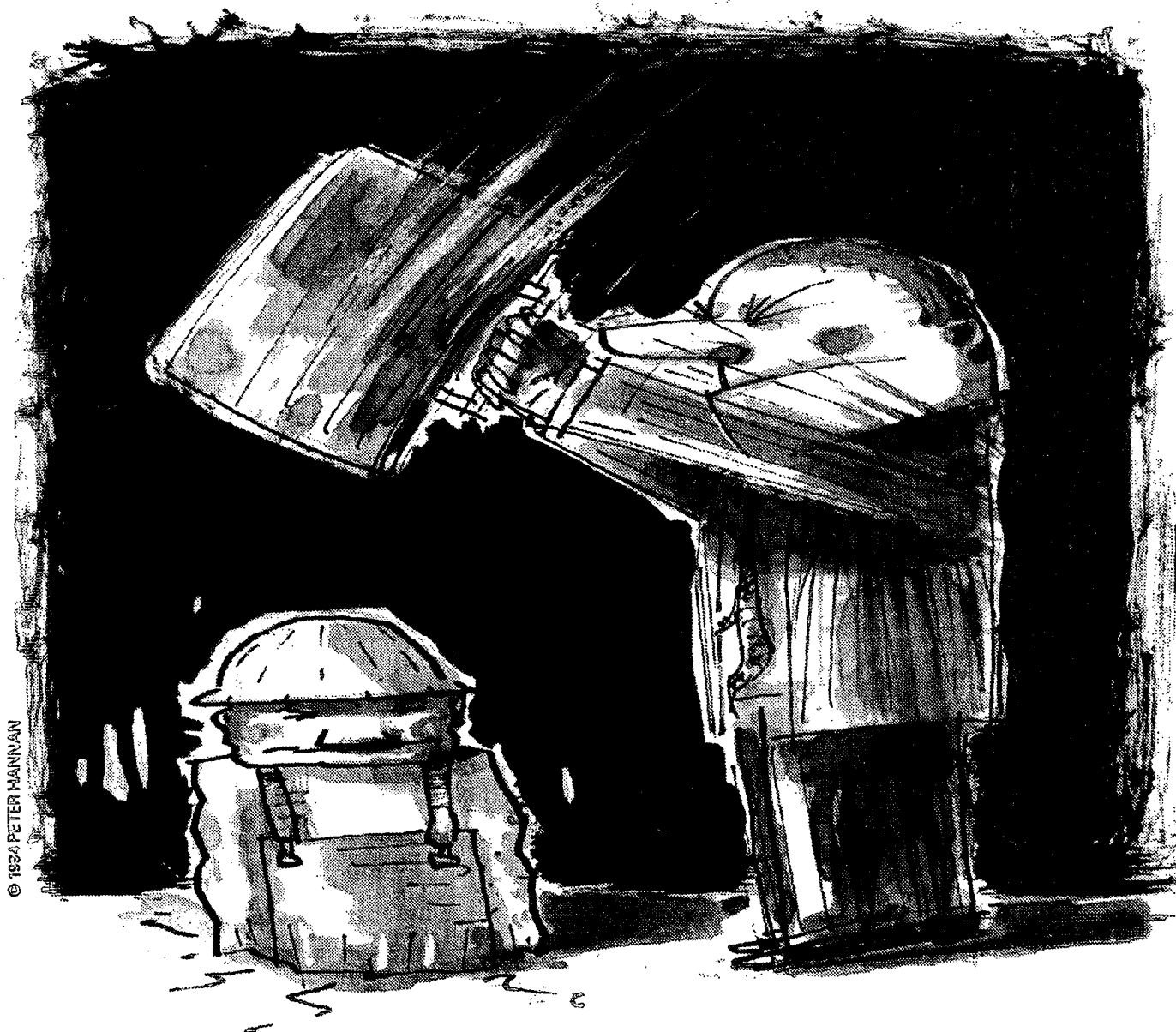
I don’t know if every single one of Levitt’s war stories is absolutely true. But I do know that the core of his indictment against management is undoubtedly authentic. I’ve seen

companies use all of the tactics he describes—from the harassment and firing of union activists to threats to leave town if the union wins—and so has anyone else who has ever been involved in union organizing.

Joining a union in America is a lot harder than joining, say, the Sierra Club or the National Rifle Association. You



**Confessions of
a Union Buster**
By Martin Jay Levitt
with Terry Conrow
Crown Publishers
302 pp., \$22.50



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can't just sign a card, mail in your dues and send your union rep in to ask your boss for a raise. Management has no legal obligation to talk to workers or their representatives about anything unless a union is "certified" as the bargaining agent for a given group of employees.

The lengthy and complex certification process usually requires a secret-ballot election in which a majority of the workers vote in favor of union representation. Because employers have so many ways to scare workers out of voting for a union, experienced labor organizers generally will not request an election until they're confident they have a solid majority of supporters.

That's where the Marty Levitts of the world come in. Their job—after landing a lucrative consulting contract from a frightened employer—is to turn a solid majority of union supporters into a frustrated minority by the time election day rolls around.

Levitt got started in the field in 1969, after answering an ad for an "employee relations consultant" in the *Wall Street Journal*. He was hired by the Chicago-based firm John Sheridan Associates. That firm's principal, John Sheridan, started as a union organizer and a student of Saul Alinsky, but he makes no apologies for his current profession.

Under Sheridan's tutelage, Levitt says, he learned how to run a comprehensive antiunion campaign. His role as consultant, he writes, was to abuse, threaten and intimidate lower management, which in turn was supposed to browbeat the workforce. Meanwhile, company lawyers would use every available tactic to steal away the union's momentum by delaying the election, and Levitt would direct a propaganda campaign intended to transform hated top executives into models of caring, sensitive leadership. (Without exception, Levitt reports, executives he encountered returned to their hateful ways the day after the company

won the election.)

Levitt claims to have won all but a handful of several hundred antiunion campaigns. Losing now and then, however, wasn't necessarily bad for business, because it gave him a chance to land another consulting job—this time to frustrate the union's effort to secure a first contract.

Under U.S. labor law, even after a union is certified as a bargaining agent, workers are merely entitled to meet with management to discuss wages and working conditions. There's no guarantee that anything has to happen at those meetings. Management is obliged only to make a "good faith" effort to reach a contract settlement, or else face an unfair-labor-practice charge called "surface bargaining."

But as Levitt points out, the penalties for surface bargaining are minimal—and it's not too difficult to avoid getting charged in the first place. He describes a tense meeting with Claude Roe, executive director of the Copeland Oaks nursing home in Ohio, and Lou Davies, Copeland's lawyer, shortly after the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) won an organizing election.

"Claude announced in a solemn voice that there was not to be a contract at Copeland Oaks. He turned to the attorney and commanded him to be Copeland's representative at the bargaining table...

"I can't do it, Claude," he said. 'I know you don't intend to bargain in good faith. ... It's called surface bargaining and it's against my professional code of conduct.'

"Claude frowned. ... He turned to me. ... Unlike Lou, I was not bound by any code of ethics or professional canons. ... The law imposes on management and a newly elected union a 'duty to bargain' for 12 months, and no more. I figured I could jerk off the union for a year, no problem."

Jerk them off he did. Levitt canceled some meetings, walked out on others and now and then would sign off on a few minor items to defend against charges of surface bargaining. Meanwhile, Copeland Oaks opened a companion medical center under a different corporate structure, eliminated some jobs at the original nursing home, and required employees to reapply for the exact same positions at the new facility.

By amazing coincidence, 18 Copeland Oaks employees—all union supporters—wound up losing their jobs as a result of the shuffle of positions between the two facilities. Punitive action against union supporters is illegal, and a year and a half later the National Labor Relations Board ruled that all 18 were entitled to their jobs back with full compensation.

But it was too little, too late. By that time the required 12 months of "negotiations" were over, with no results whatsoever, and the SEIU had formally withdrawn from its attempt to represent Copeland workers. Another union organizing effort down the drain—despite the fact that a majority of workers at Copeland Oaks had voted in favor of union representation.

Of such stuff were Marty Levitt's professional triumphs made. But lying, manipulation and deceit eventually become

a way of life, not just a way to make a living. The charismatic, mercurial personality that made him successful at running antiunion motivational campaigns also made it difficult for Levitt to hold a job in anyone else's organization.

For most of his career, Levitt worked as a freelance consultant, commanding as much as \$15,000 a month for his services. Jetting around the country to break up union organizing drives, Levitt enjoyed a lavish, if self-destructive, lifestyle—cheating on his wife (who was only too happy to cheat back), and viewing the world through a severe alcoholic haze that featured late-night drinking binges and bone-crunching hangovers. Attempting to scam his way out of financial disaster with bad checks and phony loans, he wound up convicted of fraud.

"I fought hard to picture myself in an executive suite barking orders to some lowly sycophants," writes Levitt after describing a series of especially tough mornings, "but another image superimposed itself on the first: that of a fat middle-aged man puking up eggs in a motel bathroom."

In 1987 Levitt checked himself into an alcoholism-treatment facility in Minneapolis. One day, as part of a group therapy exercise, he told his life story—including a proud recounting of his work as "the biggest, baddest name in labor relations." Afterward, he was confronted by two of his fellow patients who were factory workers and union members.

The two men, Levitt writes, were "more hurt than angry ... they just wanted to know what made me do it." It was a question to which Levitt could no longer find a satisfactory answer. A few months later he disconnected his business phone, canceled his post-office box and called AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington, D.C., to offer his public renunciation of union busting.

Union busting may no longer work as a career for Marty Levitt, but it still works well enough for corporations that are determined to maintain a "union-free environment." Just 12.7 percent of private-sector workers in the United States are unionized—the lowest ratio found in any industrialized nation.

Smaller, weaker unions translate into a decline in industry-wide wage and benefit standards that affects union and non-union workers alike. The success of antiunion consultants is one of the primary reasons that American workers have suffered losses in real wages in recent years.

The Clinton administration likes to talk about creating a "high-wage, high-skill" economy. But you can't get there from here without stronger, revitalized unions. Unless the rules of the game as described by Levitt are changed, it will be hard for unions to become stronger or more vital. There has been much public discussion lately about the need to protect workers' rights in Mexico, China and other foreign countries. Marty Levitt has made a valuable contribution by documenting, in painful detail, the abuse of working people that goes on every day in the United States. ◀

Roger Kerson is a Chicago writer and labor union consultant.

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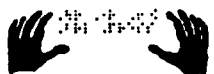
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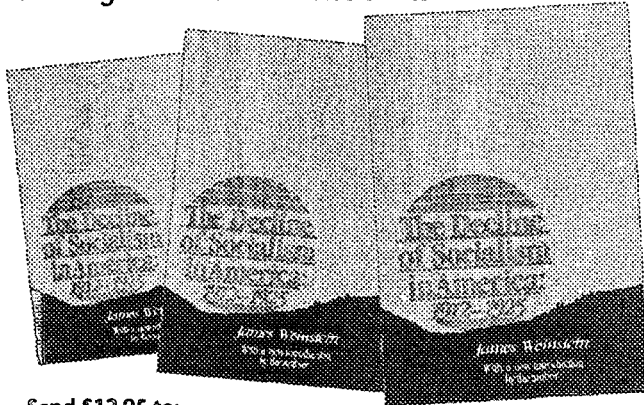
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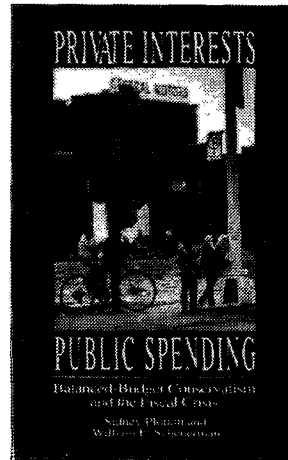
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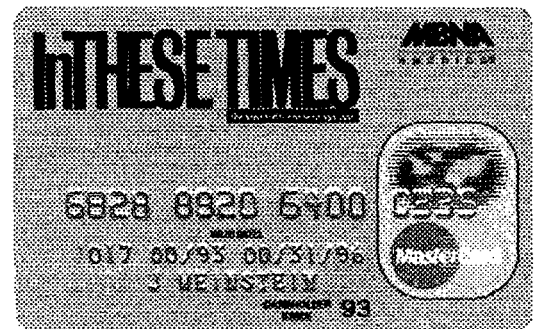
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I N T H E E N D

By Woody Igou

More D.C. microbes discovered!

Following the recent discovery of a contaminated water supply in Washington, D.C., a team of scientists did a complete analysis of the city's water. The shocking results are shown here for the first time.

Name	Mode of Transmission	Symptoms	Cure
 Packwoodium Rovinae	Congenial protozoa believed to infect tainted water coolers and damp bar tops. Unequipped with light-sensory organs, it uses sensitive cilia to blindly grope and feel out its prey.	Frontal lobe swelling produces euphoric feeling of invulnerability. Blindness often reported. Sudden losses of higher judgment now clinically known as "Moral Tourette's Syndrome."	None. Long and exceedingly painful course as infection spreads throughout the body. Memory dissipates. Immersion in lawyer-filled tank provides only temporary relief.
 Limbaughoma Marconii	Auditory infection passes through tympanic membrane. Sore or wounded individuals at greater risk of infection.	Initial symptoms include water retention, logorrhea and stupefaction. Unique oral parroting behavior known as "Dittosis," occurs whereby patient confuses internal and external cognitive influences.	Outlook bleak. Addicts have banded together to form "audio dens" in a number of restaurants across the country. The microbe has now mutated into visually transmitted pathogen infecting print and television mediums.
 Politicosa Rollinsia	Flagellant microbe thought to enter feet of patients exhausted by political campaigning. Larval stage flatworm transmitted from foot to mouth by direct insertion.	Initial irritation of the soft palate results in spontaneous press conferences. Necrosis of limbic system leads to bipolar mood swings of classic "Jekyll-Hyde Syndrome." Mystical, religious hallucinations common in later stages.	Long-term rest and press blackout without exposure to C-Span. Forced commitment to facility outside the Beltway often required.
 Perotus Minisculus	Believed similar to head lice transmission. Tiny spore explosions are triggered by the pheromone emissions of indignant populists. Spores absorbed through areas of thin, sensitive skin.	Aching in joints results in loss of patience and crankiness. <i>Platillalia</i> (inability to speak except in platitudes) common due to thickening of tongue structure. Paranoia often reported.	None. Avoiding exposure to klieg lights offers temporary reduction of cranial swelling. Call-in talk shows can cause itchiness. Recurrence of symptoms at six- to eight-month intervals unavoidable.